

John 15:18-25 – “Why Some Hate Love”

(Pew Bible Page: 902)

Intro: Last week we looked at Christ’s command that Christians are to love one another. This week, we are going to look in a far different direction. If last week we looked at love, tonight we’re going to be looking at hate. Specifically, we’re going to be thinking together about how it can be that the World hates Christ and His Church. When you think about it, it makes no sense for the World to reject Christ, His message, and His people. Jesus is God’s love come down to save the World from itself. The message Christians share about Christ is that a way to avoid disaster has come into the World with Jesus. Jesus commanded His followers, not only to love one another, but to love their enemies; to pray for those who persecute them. What motive for hatred can there be in response to these things? Nevertheless, you don’t have to be very observant to notice that the World hates what is good; persecutes those who belong to the Savior; does everything in its power to crush Christ’s Church. Such hatred isn’t natural. It’s supernatural in origin – devilish in fact. Tonight, Jesus will unpack why this is so.

Proposition: Though the World hates Christ’s love proclaimed through His Church, we should fly our flag as His living presence in this fallen world.

Our study tonight contains three headings dealing with why the World hates the Church: (vv.18-19) Because Christians are Not of This World; (vv.20-21) Because Christians are in Union with Christ; (vv.22-25) Because Christ Convicts the World of Sin Through His Church.

The World Hates the Church without a cause, said Jesus to His disciples on that night. It will help us to begin our reflection on this by considering the question, “What did Jesus mean by ‘The World’”? What is the World as Jesus uses the term here? And why does the World hate God’s people? First, a definition:

- The World is “Human society alienated from God and under the sway of Satan.”¹

In our world, two distinct kingdoms are fiercely at war: The Church and the World; the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. Why this animosity? Our text gives us three reasons. Let’s begin with the first: The World Hates the Church...

(vv.18-19) Because Christians are Not of This World – Jesus has bound the strongman and is despoiling his goods: **John 15:18–19 - 18** *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* Jesus is taking souls out of the Kingdom of Darkness and bringing them into the Kingdom of Light. As we think about this, we realize at least three things:

¹ Baker Dictionary of Theology.

John 15:18-25 – “Why Some Hate Love”

(Pew Bible Page: 902)

- The World hates Christians because the ruler of this world hates to lose his subjects. Satan’s ultimate desire is to dominate this world, replacing God as the rightful sovereign of the Kingdom of Man. He is an interloper, a thief, and he resents God’s rescue of some who because of sin are under his authority.
- The World hates Christians because Jesus has chosen us “for a distinct kind of life and purpose.”² Jesus will not leave the people He calls to follow Him in misery and degradation. He is determined to change each one who believes in Him into the image of His glory. Satan hates the very thought of this grace coming to men.
- The World hates Christians “because it rejects all who do not conform to its lifestyle.”³ A Christian’s faithful life is a rebuke to the World’s headlong rush to dissipation and moral collapse. Faithful Christians serve as a preventative and preservative (“Salt and Light” retardant) to moral decline and ultimate judgment. But Satan’s kingdom has a death wish and bitterly hates any motion to oppose its rush toward destruction.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The World hates the Church because Christians are different for Jesus’ sake.

[ILLUSTRATION] Xenophobia is fear of people who are different. Those who exhibit xenophobic behavior reject those who come from different races, cultures, and social strata. They distrust those who speak languages other than their own. They suspect foreigners of being dishonest, shifty, and violent. Satan is a specialist at planting xenophobia in the hearts of the people of the World. He is especially anxious to turn the people of this world against anyone who puts their faith in Christ.

[APPLICATION] It is blessedly true that not every unsaved person hates every individual Christian. Many people of the World are perfectly willing to accept believers as friends, so long as those who’ve put their faith in Christ don’t make too much ado about Jesus. But it is another thing when it comes to the Church. Many in our world are ready to accept Christians, but show an increasing mistrust and suspicion of Christ’s church. As followers of Jesus Christ, we might as well get used to the fact of the World’s rejection of Christ and His Church, and any believer who stands courageously for Christ in our day will be increasingly ostracized as the Kingdom of Darkness continues its march toward oblivion. What should we do? Love them in Jesus’ name, of course. Follow Jesus’ commands. Accept willingly being “guilty as charged” for being a believer. That is how we shine in the darkness.

(vv.20-21) Because Christians are in Union with Christ – Jesus gave a second reason why the World hates His Church in these verses: **John 15:20–21 - 20** *Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they*

² Expositor’s Bible Commentary.

³ Expositor’s Bible Commentary.

John 15:18-25 – “Why Some Hate Love”

(Pew Bible Page: 902)

kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. The World, the flesh and the devil hate Spirit-filled Christians because of our indissoluble union with Christ. It's only natural: if you hate the Head of the Body, you will inevitably hate the whole Body. Notice that the citizens of this world will react to the Church in the World the same way they reacted to Jesus when He was present physically in this world. The open hearted will be open; the closed of heart will be closed. This is the same way that the World treats God's Word. Hearts that are prepared, receive it with joy. Hearts that are hardened, flee from its presence. Notice also that the World's hatred for Christ and His followers is a reflection of the World's hatred of God.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The World hates the Church because Christians are in union with Christ.

[ILLUSTRATION] In elementary school, children often suffer rejection by those who should be their friends, not because the would-be friend has anything against the child but because someone they know has slandered or said unkind things about the child. Sometimes these division are based on nothing more than a close association with some other out of favor child. “I'm not going to hang out with you because you hang out with him!” It isn't just children that play these games, is it?

[APPLICATION] Hang out with Jesus and the World will give you the “cold shoulder.” Far from being lamentable, our Bible's tell us that this ostracization for Jesus' sake is a glory to be relished! (cf. 1 Peter 4:14). When Christ's disciples were beaten and publicly shamed by the authorities of their day, the Scriptures tell us that they went home rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for His name's sake (Acts 5:42). What should we do when we are shamed for being Christians? Let's do as the apostles did. Let's rejoice that we too have been counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake.

(vv.22-25) Because Christ convicts the World of sin through His Church – Jesus pointed out to His disciples that the World has been convicted finally and forever of sin because of His coming: **John 15:22–25** - **22** *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23* *Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24* *If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25* *But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'* How does the World in our day experience Christ's coming to them in this convicting power? Through His Church. Jesus revealed two sources of this conviction: He came and spoke to them, and He did works among them that no one else did. In just this same way the Church is the instrument convicting the World of sin in our day. We speak the good news we've heard about Jesus; we do the works we've seen Him do in our lives and in the lives of other needy people. The World hates Christ and His Church because our presence among them is the convicting presence of God among them.

John 15:18-25 – “Why Some Hate Love”

(Pew Bible Page: 902)

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Christians are the convicting presence of Christ among those alienated from God.

[ILLUSTRATION] Some preachers don't like to tell people they are preachers because people act differently when they know a man of God has entered the room. Personally, I used my status as an evangelical missionary to my advantage when entering government offices in Paraguay. A little conviction of sin can go a long way toward encouraging at least momentary propriety in this world! Either way, the point is this: when people who are alienated from Christ know that we are those who belong to Jesus, they sometimes become uncomfortable, defensive, and sometime even downright hostile. The mere presence of the Church in the World causes hatred to rear its ugly head from time to time.

[APPLICATION] Should we then remain quiet? Should we go “full stealth” in our witness for Christ? Some would have us believe that, quoting or perhaps misquoting St. Francis, who is reputed to have said, “Preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words.” There is no evidence that St. Francis actually said that, but if he had, how strange this would sound in the ears of first century Christians! They couldn't stop talking about what God had done for them through Jesus (Acts 4:20). No, dear ones. The Church's calling is to speak and demonstrate the life-giving presence of Jesus in the World, come what may. When we fail to do this, we are short-circuiting God's plan of evangelism. Salvation begins with conviction of sin and conviction of sin begins with Christian witness. Determine to fly your flag and let conviction do its proper work!

Conclusion: Strange as it sounds, the World hates Christ and His Church because Christ loves those caught in the World's trap. As Jesus pointed out in the last verse of our study, this makes no sense at all. Why should a drowning man hate the person who throws him a life preserver? It is irrational, and that of course is the hallmark of hell. Satan is behind the World and its hatred of Jesus and His people. What are we to do? Boldly live out our testimony for Christ in our day. That is the way of the Church for two thousand years. Let's make sure that we keep faith with Christ and His Church in our generation.