



## I Will Not Leave You

### Message Notes, October 2, 2016

John 14:15-31, 16:5-16

In recent weeks, we have been with Jesus and his disciples in the “upper room.” Jesus now transitions his teaching from abiding in him (the Vine) to how the world will hate us when we follow him.

Persecution is not a favorite topic, but clearly Jesus felt it was important to inform and prepare his disciples for the reality that “the world” will hate them when they (truly) follow him.

Verse 17 sets love as the transition from “you are my branches, my disciples” to “the world will hate you.” Love is how the world will know we are his, but our love will often be met with a response of “hate.”

There are three meanings for this expression, “the world”:

1. The globe we live on; the physical earth
2. The people who live on the earth
3. The broken systems of the world; the values, principles and pursuits of fallen humanity. These systems are opposed to the kingdom of God. Satan is prince of *this* world. (This is the meaning Jesus is using in John 15.)

#### Persecution

**1. Is NOT being offended.** When the world ridicules or snubs our values, this is the world simply being what it is – lost, blind, antagonistic. This is not persecution.

**2. Is NOT provoking the world’s opposition by my own words or actions.** We must guard against the subtle shift from opposing the broken *systems* of the world to resenting or becoming indignant towards *people*. We don’t want to assume an antagonistic posture that tries to “pick a fight.”

**3. IS genuine suffering as a result of faithfully following Jesus.** We American Christians honestly know little about such suffering. In other parts of the world, simply claiming to believe in Jesus means the loss of possessions, imprisonment or even execution.

On one hand, we can be grateful that we live in a country with religious freedom. On the other hand, our reality is changing. Christianity no longer holds a favored cultural status in our country. America has become more of a religious melting pot. “Ideological tolerance” is now what’s valued. Opposition to the church is on the rise.

This loss of “favored status” is certainly a function of the continuing moral and religious disintegration in our country, but another contributing factor is that the church has lost its vitality. We do not “let our light shine in such a way that men may see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Ours has become a comfortable, cultural Christianity that has no impact. The world (in America) no longer sees the church as relevant. If we rise up to our calling to be salt and light; to love like Jesus loved (*proving to be his disciples*), then America will take notice. Two things will happen: We will meet with more opposition and persecution, and we will also have greater impact in the lives of those who are hungry and searching.

This season in our country is an important time of shaking for the church. It is a pruning time. In a sense, God is drawing a line in the sand – Christians will either stand strong and devoted or shrink back and blend in with our culture, basically fading away. Again, the former will mean greater impact but also greater persecution.



Jesus is telling his disciples to **remember**:

1. The world hated Him first. (He understands the suffering. He comes alongside us.)
2. The world hates us because it hates Jesus. (Don't take it personally; we suffer for the Kingdom.)
3. The world hates you because you don't belong to it. (The world is frustrated because it doesn't own you.)

#### **What does this mean?**

1. In persecution, we identify with Jesus. (He has identified with *our* humanity. In persecution, we identify with *his* suffering. We honor him, and we experience his presence, that of the "suffering servant.")
2. We will have the chance to testify to his kingdom and Lordship.
3. "The world loves its own" (15:19). Persecution will tempt us to compromise and blend into the world.

#### **Why is Jesus telling them (and us) these things?**

1. So we will not go astray.
2. So we want be surprised. (It is a false notion that Christianity is about comfort, worldly security, and material prosperity.)
3. So we will find the strength to love those who hate us. (See Matthew 5:44-48.)

Ultimately, Jesus is sending us into the world, to bear witness to him, to love like he loves, to share the hope of the gospel. He is not sending us to war *against* people in the world. Like his Father, He so loves the world that he gives us, his beloved sons and daughters, that whoever would come to believe in him through our witness might have everlasting life. He does not send us to condemn the world but so the world, through our witness, might be saved." (John 3:16-17, paraphrased to reflect our mission.) Here "the world" means the people in the world.

#### **Reflection Questions**

1. Have you felt like you are experiencing persecution? Is it genuine persecution or one of the false expressions of persecution?  
If the latter, what adjustment(s) might you make to put this in proper perspective?  
If the former, what words from this message encourage you?
2. In what ways might you be compromising in your devotion to the Lord and his kingdom by conforming to the culture of this world? How can you repent from or surrender such compromises to the Lord?
3. What are ways you might focus on "loving our enemies"? What are specific ways you can love "worldly" people around you . . . and thus "bear fruitful witness to Him"?