

# Belonging that Bears Witness

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[0:00] John 15, starting at verse 18 and down through the end of the chapter. John 15, starting at verse 18 and down through the end of the chapter.

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Thank you, Alice. Let's pray. Father, we give you thanks for your goodness, for your greatness, and for your grace, and for your glory.

It is our privilege to gather together and to worship you. Father, thank you for loving us before time began, and for setting in motion the plan of redemption by setting your love on people like us. Sinners, rebels, those who were your enemies because of our sin. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth, for doing the will of the Father, for obeying all the way to the cross.

[2:12] Thank you for bearing up under the load of our sin and bearing it away so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to the Father.

Holy Spirit, as we have sang together, we adore you in the triune Godhead. We're so grateful for your work to awaken us to our need of a Savior, to show us our sin, to give us life, to grant repentance, to give us faith, so that we could respond by repenting and believing this gospel. Thank you now, Holy Spirit, for living inside of us, such as we are. Thank you for living inside of us. Would you please help us as we continue in this time of worship, as we sit under the preaching of your word, would you open your word to us, Spirit of Truth, and help us to see those things that are most helpful for us today.

Would you speak to us through your word, for your glory and for our good. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Maybe you have seen the humorous slogan on a t-shirt or maybe on a sign at the workplace.

Sometimes you'll see this put up in the break room. It's kind of a joke, but it says this. Beatings will continue until morale improves.

[4:00] This is funny because it assumes something absurd. That hostility will somehow produce happiness.

But I wonder if we as followers of Jesus assume something just as backward. I wonder if we assume that following Jesus will make us popular.

When you became a Christian, I'm fairly certain that no one handed you a brochure that said, Welcome to following Jesus. You will be misunderstood.

You will occasionally be excluded. You may be resented for doing what is right. You might suffer for absolutely no reason at all.

Expect to be persecuted for your newfound faith. Have a blessed day. This is not how we typically frame discipleship with Jesus.

[5:13] And yet, it is the reality of life with Jesus. As we continue in John 15, Jesus prepares his followers for opposition.

And he calls them to be faithful witnesses right in the middle of the opposition that they receive. Because we are chosen, but not always cheered.

Jesus has just told his disciples in the first part of chapter 15, I am the true vine and you are the branches.

And if you abide in me, you will bear much fruit. Abiding means remaining. Staying connected to Jesus.

Receiving his life and his resurrection power. Living in union with him through the Holy Spirit. Abiding means remaining.

[6:19] And abiding means obeying. And so, Jesus says in chapter 15 and verse 10, If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.

Just as I kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. And again, in verse 12, This is my commandment that you love one another.

As I have loved you. Abiding means remaining. And abiding means obeying. Abide in my love.

Love one another. You are my friends, Jesus goes on to say. I have chosen you. This is intimate. It is reassuring.

It is comforting. It is encouraging. This is full of belonging. And then, Jesus says this in verse 18.

[7:23] If the world hates you, Know that it hated me before it hated you.

When I was growing up, I was not allowed to say, I hate so-and-so.

And for good reason. Hate is such a strong word, isn't it? And Jesus does not use it lightly.

And he doesn't mean if, as though hatred is merely possible. You might hear Jesus' words more like this. If the world hates you, and it will.

So what does Jesus mean by the world? What is this world that is going to hate us?

[8:18] Well, the world is not the planet. It's not earth. It's not the globe. He's not talking about humanity in general. In John's gospel, world often means something more specific.

World is a way of thinking, a way of living. A way of thinking and living that doesn't care about God's commands or God's character.

The world is people and values and priorities and power structures acting as though God is unnecessary, unwanted, even unwelcome.

This is the world. It's like a computer that has become infected with malware. This is the world. It is no longer operating according to the designer's plan.

Or you might think about a team, and the coach has designed a play. And then everyone goes out onto the field and just improvises and does their own thing.

[9:31] Or you might think about a drama troupe, where everyone is allowed to just bring their own costume and show up on the day of the show with whatever costume they want. And next thing you know, Mary Poppins looks like the Wicked Witch of the West.

This is the world. A system, a way of thinking and living that does not care about God's commands or character. The world is a system that is still functioning, but it is no longer aligned with the one who designed it.

The world is creation attempting to function all the while rebelling against its creator.

And when you live under the authority of the true king, inside a kingdom that rejects the true king's authority, you can expect opposition.

Opposition is inevitable. The world's hatred is not random. It is relational. Why does the world hate followers of Jesus?

[10:48] Well, because the disciples have been chosen by Jesus, the one that the world truly hates. And as they abide in him, as they become more like him, as they obey his commands, as they bear his fruit, what the disciples can expect to be hated by the world.

Look at verse 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.

The world's hatred is not random. It is relational. And then Jesus reminds his followers of something that he has already taught them.

Back in chapter 13, perhaps just a few moments or an hour or so ago, Jesus wrapped himself with a towel, got down and washed his disciples' feet.

[12:03] And he said this to them, the servant is not greater than his master. And in that moment of washing the disciples' feet, he meant, since I have humbled myself to serve you, you should also humble yourselves and serve one another.

A servant is not greater than his master. Now, Jesus applies this same principle to persecution. Look at verse 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 kept my word, they will also keep yours. 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's hatred is not random. It is relational. And followers of Jesus should expect to be persecuted because of our connection to Jesus.

[13:34] In spite of his teaching and in spite of his miracles, the world rejects Jesus. Jesus. This is where the conflict in this text deepens.

They do not know him. Who is the him? They do not know him who sent me. In other words, the world does not know the Father.

This is sobering. If they knew the Father, they would recognize the Son. And yet, despite his teaching, they reject him.

And despite his miracles, they reject him. Look at verse 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. Whoever hates me hates my Father also.

[14:41] If I had not done among them the works, the miracles, the signs that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin.

But now, they have seen and hated both me and my Father. Now, let's be clear about this.

Jesus is not saying that his coming created guilt as though if Jesus had not come, somehow the world would be in a better standing with God.

Rather, he is saying this. The brightest light, the clearest possible revelation of God.

That's me. And despite the brightest light and despite the clearest, fullest revelation of God, still, they refuse to believe.

[15:42] Jesus is the brightest light. He is the clearest revelation this world has ever received. John told us this from the beginning. It is Jesus who makes the invisible God visible.

Chapter 1 and verse 18. No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

The fullest revelation of God the world has ever seen. Jesus himself said this in John 14. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. and chapter 3 verse 19.

The light has come into the world. And it wasn't merely Jesus' presence. His miracles also testified that he was God.

Even Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a well-respected teacher among the Jews, admitted this. chapter 3 verse 2. We know that you are a teacher come from God.

[16:54] For no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. They knew that he was from God.

And yet, chapter 12 and verse 37, though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him.

Before Jesus entered the world, someone might claim confusion about who God is and what God is like.

someone might be so bold to claim that confusion. But when the light of the world is blazing in your presence, and when the sun is living among you, saying and doing things that only God can do, teaching, healing, raising the dead, and you still refuse to believe, this is not confusion, this is not ignorance, this is willful rejection of the brightest light and the clearest revelation.

And yet, rejecting the sun and persisting on in rebellion, none of this threatens God's purposes. On the contrary, the world's hatred actually fulfills scripture.

[18:39] Look what Jesus says next in verse 25. But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled.

They hated me without a cause. I hope that when we gather for worship and we sing together, that you are thoughtful, about the words that we are singing.

That while we're singing those words, you're contemplating those truths and that those truths are sinking down into your heart, that you're mindful of the fact, oh yeah, that truth that we just sang, I remember that from my scripture reading.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit will bring these truths to mind as you continue on into your week. I think it's very ironic that if these religious leaders, if those who were so strongly opposed to Jesus, had only

listened to the lyrics that they were singing when they went in for worship, when they got to Psalm number 69, they would have realized that their hatred for Jesus was without a cause, that their hatred was misplaced, that their hatred was improper, that they would sing Psalm number 69, which is where Jesus lifts this from, and they would go, oh, what if our hatred of that teacher, that guy who's, what if our hatred is without cause?

Because Psalm 69 actually says, they hated me without a cause. Because the world hates the Son, it also hates the Father, the one who sent him, and because the world hates the Father and the Son, we should expect that the world will hate those who belong to the Son.

[20:53] The hatred that his followers experience is due to their connection with Jesus. here's the tension.

Jesus has just told them that he is going away. Chapter 14 and verse 28, he says, I am going away. so, if the world's hatred is due to our association with Jesus, if the world's hatred is because of our connection with Jesus, and Jesus is going away, then maybe the world's hatred for us will diminish. Maybe the world's hatred will go down. Maybe the pressure will ease just a little bit on us as his followers. Maybe the opposition will fade away as people forget about Jesus.

No. Why not? Look at verse 26. But when the helper comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. when Jesus departs and returns to the Father, he promises to send the helper, the Spirit of truth.

[22:34] The Holy Spirit does not replace Christ. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ. To receive the Spirit is to have the life of Jesus Christ dwelling inside of you, which means Jesus is not disappearing from the world at all.

Rather, his presence is multiplying through his followers. And if the world hated him, when he was with them in the flesh, it will not celebrate when he continues with them in his people.

The witness continues and so does the resistance. The world's hostility towards Jesus does not diminish. It is now redirected to his followers.

And yet his followers are not alone. They are not abandoned. orphaned. They are not orphaned. They are helped by the helper.

And so they persevere. Not by some kind of sheer willpower, but by the spirit's power. And his followers continue to bear witness to Jesus Christ, even when they are hated for belonging to him.

[24:28] I wonder if it would be helpful for us to examine our appetite for applause. This is what I mean.

Since Jesus teaches that the world will hate us, because we have been chosen out of the world, then why are we still so hungry for the world's affirmation?

Ask yourself, do my values and my priorities align more with the world than with the gospel? people? Why do I stay silent because it feels safer? What am I pursuing in order to get approval that quietly weakens my testimony for Jesus?

Follower of Jesus, you are secure in him. You are secure in him. So when the world's opposition exposes what you crave, repent, receive forgiveness, God's grace is sufficient.

[25:56] Choose abiding over the world's affirmation. Let's examine our appetite for applause.

Second, let's expect friction without being sandpaper. If you are hated for being arrogant, if you are hated for stepping on others, if you are hated because you are acting nothing like Jesus, this is not persecution.

opposition. This is a consequence for your bad behavior. But if you are abiding in the true vine, and if you are bearing his fruit, and if you are obeying his commands, and if you are loving others, living contrary to the world's values and priorities, then you should expect opposition.

John says this in his first letter, do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. He must have been reflecting on this night before the crucifixion.

Don't be surprised. I read this yesterday, and I thought to myself, then why are we surprised? John specifically tells us not to be surprised, and yet we are surprised when we experience friction for being followers of Jesus.

[27:39] Ours is a belonging that bears witness. So don't be sandpaper, but expect friction when you choose to be like the one who chose you.

Third, remember, being hated is serious, but it is not personal. The world will not tolerate those who expose their sin.

The world will not celebrate those who conform their lives and the words and the ways of Jesus. Those who give their allegiance to the rightful king will rarely be popular with those who reject him. The hostility that you experience is very real. It may cost you reputation. It may cost you relationships.

It may cost you family. It may cost opportunity. It may cost comfort. Being hated for the sake of the faith is serious, but it is not ultimately about you.

[29:06] It's about Jesus in you. So don't internalize what's directed at him. Don't confuse rejection with failure.

Don't wonder if the resistance that you are experiencing means you are somehow defeated. If you belong to Christ, what hurts you matters to him.

You do not suffer alone. He will never leave you nor forsake you. It is serious to be hated, but it is not personal.

Young people, following Jesus will not make you the most popular person at school. People, if you tell the truth when others are deceitful, and if you are kind when others are thoughtless or mean, if you don't laugh at the things that others think are so funny, and if you say that you believe in Jesus, Jesus, sometimes that will feel very awkward, but it does not mean that you're doing something wrong.

[30:37] The same spirit who helped the disciples will help you. His presence matters more than popularity.

Do you believe that? His presence matters more than popularity. Don't trade belonging to him for a few minutes of fitting in.

We are chosen, but we are not always cheered. Jesus never promised us applause.

He promised his presence. The world may resist you. The world may misunderstand you. The world may reject you, but if you belong to Christ, you are not alone.

You are not abandoned. You are not exposed or powerless. Why? Because the helper has come. Christ has not disappeared from the world.

[31:46] He lives in his people. And this belonging to Christ leads to bearing witness for him.

So be faithful. When approval tempts you, choose his presence. When opposition rattles you, trust the helper.

When hatred hurts, remember that you are never alone. This is a belonging that bears fruit. This is a belonging that bears witness.

How? By steady goodness, by ordinary faithfulness, by bold testimony. Opposition will continue, but so will his presence with us.

We may not be cheered, my brothers and sisters, but we have been chosen. Let's pray. Let's pray.

[32:58] Thank you.