



“Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.”

John 16:2

The Challenge of Loving Jesus

JOHN 15:18—16:15 ¹⁸*“If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. ²¹But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²²If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’*

²⁶*“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.*

16 ¹*"I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. ³And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. ⁴But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.*

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹²*"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

In sharp contrast to the previous section of the farewell discourse, which led to Jesus' command that his disciples love one another, this section focuses on the world's hatred toward the disciples. During Jesus' earthly ministry, he himself bore the brunt of the world's persecution. But when he is removed from the world, the world's hatred will inevitably turn toward his disciples (verse 18). The type of relationship that Jesus has with his Father and that the disciples have with Jesus is not viewed favorably by those who trust only in power, control, and coercion. In fact, "the world" of these servants of power will hate the friends of Jesus who "do not belong to the world" (verse 19). The way of the world, which says that domination and control are the way to happiness, is directly opposed to the way of loving service done in freedom. Because Jesus has chosen them out of the world and closely identified them

with himself, people's response toward the disciples will mirror their response toward Jesus (verse 20). The more his followers become like him, the more evident it will become that, though they are "in the world," they are not "of the world."

Although most of the farewell discourse of Jesus is full of encouragement, these words of Jesus are spoken to prevent the disciples from being surprised when persecution comes and so that they will not fall away (16:1). The history of the early church provides abundant evidence of the accuracy of Jesus' predictions. Followers of Jesus will first be "put out of the synagogues," causing social ostracism, but then the authority of the Roman emperors will unleash far worse persecution on those who claim to follow Jesus. In response to this hatred, exclusion, persecution, and even martyrdom, the church needs the Advocate, "the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father" (verse 26), to bear witness to Jesus and assure disciples of the trustworthiness of the cause.

The human experience of continual parting from loved ones would fill our lives with constant sorrow were it not for the hope-filled existence we have been given in Christ. Upon his departure from them, Jesus says to his disciples, "Sorrow has filled your hearts" (verse 6). Yet, amazingly, Jesus also said to them, "It is to your advantage that I go away" (verse 7). The earthly attachment of Jesus and his disciples had to end, but only to create a bond that would never end, an attachment of the disciples to Jesus and the Father through the Holy Spirit.

The Advocate is the glorified Christ made present when he is absent, the fulfillment of Jesus' promises to dwell within his disciples. Though it might seem attractive to have been with Jesus during his earthly life, there is no doubt that Jesus is more present to us now in the Spirit than he ever was to his disciples during his earthly life. In those days, Jesus lived "with" his disciples; after he is glorified, Jesus lives "in" his disciples through the Spirit.

The Spirit of truth will guide believers "into all the truth" (verse 13). If our understanding of Jesus were limited to only what Jesus was able to convey to his followers during his public ministry, our belief would be as inadequate as that of the disciples before the resurrection. But the Holy Spirit enlightens disciples to understand and experience the truth of Jesus much more richly. Because of the Spirit, Jesus is not a distant figure from the past. He is the living Lord of the twenty-first century, and his mission continues in and through his Spirit-led followers.

Reflection and discussion

- What negative responses have I received because I am identified as a friend of Jesus? Why do speaking truth and showing love often lead to hostility from others?
- In what sense has Jesus taken us “out of the world”? What does it mean to be “in the world” but not “of the world”?
- Our lives are filled with good-byes, yet when Jesus was saying farewell to his disciples, he said, “It is to your advantage that I go away.” What difficult good-byes have I offered lately? When has a farewell been full of hope for me?

Prayer

Living Lord, you have sent your Spirit to empower your disciples to transform our world with your truth. Guide me in your Spirit, and help me comprehend your truth in all its richness and depth. Make me a person of hope, and enable me to entrust my future to you.