

**John 15:18-21**

18 "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If 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. 20 Remember 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. 21 But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Last week I talked about the lesson from Jesus about only a few being chosen. This week is a lesson on those that are chosen. The Scripture takes place during Holy Week when the religious leaders challenge Jesus and he educates the audience by delivering a form of speech known as parables. In a wedding banquet the people rejected the Lord's invitation. So, the Lord invites everyone but only a few are chosen. In the parable Israel has long been known as the chosen people. But they reject God's invitation and as a consequence, they are no longer chosen. Today's lesson is on the replacements that the Lord has chosen.

In John chapter 15 after the Last Supper, Jesus and the disciples go to Gethsemane. It is a very tender moment in their lives together. Jesus knows he is leaving them, he knows where he is going and he knows the fate that awaits his disciples. He delivers his farewell comments to the disciples and instructs them on the necessity of bearing fruit and keeping his commandments. Jesus puts emphasis on the concept of love. We are to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Jesus chose you and appoints you to bear fruit and love one another.

Jesus knows what is facing the disciples. The believing community which is governed by love has a relationship with the outside community that is governed by hatred resulting in persecution and death. The community of believers will be treated the same way Jesus is treated. They will be rejected by those that oppose Jesus. The world will hate you but it hated Jesus first. If you belong to the world, it will love you as it supports selfishness and numerous vices. But you do not belong to the world because you are chosen by Jesus to be out of the world.

The lesson contrasts love and hate. Love is a reflection of God's nature and hate is a reflection of the nature of the world. Pruning is necessary for growth in the heavenly realm just like pruning is necessary for growth in the agricultural realm. The branches connect God. Jesus is the vine and the branches cannot grow apart from vine. It is the healthy branches that bear fruit. The dead vines are cut off and burned. The world's hatred is manifested in the crucifixion of Jesus and the persecution of the disciples. The world was hostile to God so God sent Jesus into the world. The world was hostile to Jesus so Jesus sent his disciples. The world is also hostile to the disciples. A major part of the problem is the attitude of the self-righteous that are so focused on what they want that they fail to consider what God wants. Without understand the nature of God, the Jews then exclude the disciples from the synagogues.

Whereas the self-righteous think they are right with God, it is Jesus and the disciples that are actually true to God. At the time when Jesus is delivering his farewell message to them, they have not yet incurred hostility. But from Pentecost forward the world's hatred gets displayed. The world is partial to its own standards and the people that support those standards. Those that hate and reject Jesus do the same to his followers. That's because the chosen leave the ways of

the world behind them and the hatred of the world stands in direct contrast to internal relationships that are governed by love.

You are God's children. Your loyalty is to God. You are to imitate Jesus and transmit divine love to others. The call to love is tested by a world of hatred which is an extension of the hatred the world has for Jesus. The disciples are hated because of their relationship with Jesus. He showed his love by laying down his life for us. The world did not know how to love because it did not have the role model to follow until we began to follow Jesus. The disciples and Jesus incur the world's wrath because they do not belong to the world. If disciples share in the gifts of love, they must also share in the consequences. The disciples were cast out of synagogues, cut off from family, persecuted, and killed. However, believers are not to retaliate. We are to respond to hatred as Jesus responded to hatred. We are to love.

If it feels like people are against you that can be a good thing. The world hates you because you are living for Jesus. Make sure they hate you for your position not your disposition. As long as you are living for Jesus the only reason they have to hate you is because evil hates the good. I wonder if we are hated enough. The church that we love and support is to be the kind of church that Jesus planned and desired. The Devil tried to kill Jesus but that didn't work. So, now the very best of Satan is going for the life of the church.