

Life in the World

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- [0 : 00] A part of the problem for many people is that things are changing so rapidly. It's hard to know what to expect next. And expectations can often help or hinder us, can't they?
- For example, if we have wrong expectations and then we see the reality, it can often bring us discouragement or it can dishearten us. So, for example, some people on holidays, they were hoping to go and see, this is what they had in mind, this is what they expected, the Great Wall of China, but when they got there, the reality was that.
- Or to some other people, they were expecting to go and see the Mona Lisa and admire Da Vinci's work, but when they got there, the reality was that. Other people were expecting to have a nice holiday at the Maldives, but when they got there, the reality was that.
- Or even more recently, the supermarkets set an hour aside for those in our community to go and shop, and that's what they expected to find, items on the shelves, but when they got there, in many cases, the shelves were empty.
- The point is having wrong expectations can cause great disappointment and even grief. And it's the same when it comes to the Christian life. I know of several young Christians who thought becoming a Christian would mean the rest of their lives would sail through easily.
- [1 : 28] And when the reality was different to that, they became discouraged and disheartened. Some older Christians that I've met over the years, they expected that God would answer their prayers the way that they wanted God to answer them.
- And when they weren't, they were discouraged and disheartened. And some were even tempted to give up on God altogether. Well, today is a reality check for us.
- Because as we return to John's Gospel this Sunday, we looked at it last Sunday, although it feels like a long time ago, Jesus helps his disciples to have right expectations of life in this world.
- And he does this so that they're not disheartened, but instead are heartened to follow him. And so the first expectation Jesus gives is really what point one, and the outline is, oops, on the slide.
- So it's that in this world, life in this world will come with persecution. So have a look at verse 18 in your Bibles. Chapter 15, verse 18, we read, If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.
- [2 : 40] If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.
- That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you, though, a servant is not greater than his master. So if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.
- If they obeyed my teaching, they would obey you also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.
- Now notice this treatment here, verse 21, is because of my name, says Jesus. In other words, we will be persecuted for being Christians. This is the first expectation we should have.

And it shouldn't really surprise us. Because in verse 20, No servant is greater than their master. If the world persecuted Jesus, then the world will persecute us, his followers, too.

[3 : 47] Or verse 18, If the world hated Jesus, then they will hate us, too. You see, Jesus was the most loving and godly person in history who came to save the world, but not everyone likes hearing that they need to be saved.

And not everyone likes seeing such godliness that shows up their ungodliness. So while some will be saved, many in the world will persecute.

And if they persecuted Jesus, then they will persecute us, too. Even when we seek to love them and share with them the way to be saved from sin.

Now, of course, this persecution looks different depending on where we are in the world. It was only three years ago when in Egypt, Christians were on a tour bus and they were told to get off at gunpoint and told to renounce Christ.

And if they didn't, they were shot. 28 were killed that day. We have some in our own church who know some of their families. Or in China, it's getting harder to meet as Christians.

[5 : 01] And so in the province of Sichuan, the church was closed last November. And you can see there before and after. So afterwards, there's no more cross.

There's no more advertising. And the 200 members were dispersed. That's just one example. Or last month, Boko Haram burnt out a church in Nigeria.

Here are the four elders meeting to get ready for their Sunday service in their burnt out building. Now, of course, it's different for us here in Melbourne.

For us at a personal level, it could be the fact that people talk about us behind our back, give us strange looks, perhaps slander us on social media.

We've seen plenty of that. Or perhaps overlook you for a job or promotion. But that's the less subtle ways. Corporately, we've seen...

[5 : 55] Sorry, that's the subtle ways. Corporately, we've seen less subtle ways. Like the removal of Scripture from the school timetable in Victoria. In fact, I know of some churches who used to meet in school halls.

But since the marriage vote and Israel Folau and all that sort of business, the school has since asked them to leave. Now, while it is sad, we should...

And we should petition what we can and, you know, follow the legal avenues we have. It shouldn't surprise us, says Jesus. We're to expect persecution in life in this world.

Because verse 19, we don't belong to the world, but to Jesus. And we're not to... We're not on the world's team as it was. We're on Jesus' team. And so just as there's rivalry between the teams when they play in sport, even more so, there will be rivalry, including persecution, between the world and Jesus and His followers.

Which means if we never face any persecution of any kind, then I wonder if it's worth asking ourselves, who do we really belong to?

[7 : 12] Do we show that we belong to Jesus? Jesus or the world? Now, don't mishear me. We're not to go looking for persecution. I'm not saying that. And we must always be gentle and loving in our manner.

But we're to have the expectation that persecution will happen. For we are not greater than Jesus, such that we can avoid it. And because we belong to Him and not to the world.

In fact, Jesus will go on verses 22 to 25 to talk about the fact that just as the world hated Him, it means they will hate His Father too.

Because by His words and works, He's revealed the Father to the world. And by rejecting Jesus, they have rejected the Father. But again, verse 25, this should come as no surprise because it's what was predicted in the Old Testament.

Verse 25, But this is to fulfill what is written in their law, they hated me without reason. You see, we shouldn't be surprised.

[8 : 19] We should expect persecution. And the 11 apostles particularly needed to hear this because they had to testify about Jesus to the world. You see verse 26 and 27, When the advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. The advocate here refers to the Holy Spirit. In ancient times, an advocate was a friend, less of a lawyer kind of person, but a friend who advocated for you, who helped you.

He works, the Spirit works in our conscience and minds to help us follow Jesus. We see elsewhere in the Bible that idea. But here, in John 15, we're told that he will testify about Jesus, just like the 11 will testify about Jesus because they've been with him since the beginning.

In other words, the Spirit will point people to Jesus. Now we'll see how in a moment, but it's worth noticing that this is the Spirit's job. Because sometimes people think that we don't talk enough about the Spirit at our church.

I don't know if you've ever heard that. but the Spirit himself wants to point us to Jesus. And so if we keep talking about the Spirit all the time, we're actually going to make his job harder, you see.

[9 : 55] We're meant to talk about Jesus and focus on him. Or sometimes people say, I'm looking for a Spirit-filled church. But the Spirit-filled church is a Jesus-following church because the Spirit points people to Jesus, you see.

And so if you want a Spirit-filled church, then go to one, or you can't at the moment, live stream one that follows Jesus. But the main point here is that these 11, along with us, are to expect persecution in the world and not be surprised by it.

Why? Well, chapter 16, verse 1, all this I have told you, says Jesus, so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of synagogues.

In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.

I have told you this so that when their time comes, you will remember that I warned you about them. You see, they need to remember and expect persecution so that they won't fall away, so that they won't be discouraged and disheartened and give up.

[11 : 11] But rather, remember the warning so they are armed and ready to face it. One of the greatest Spanish writers, it was this man called Miguel de Cervantes.

I'm sure I'm pronouncing that incorrectly, but anyway, one of his famous quotes here is, forewarned is to be forearmed. To be prepared is half the victory.

That's true, isn't it? That's what Jesus is doing here. Preparing or forewarning us, giving us right expectations so that we are forearmed, ready to face what comes.

so that we won't say, oh, what's going on here? I can't believe this is happening. But rather, we'll say, yep, Jesus told us about that. That's okay. We'll persevere through.

Well, in life, in this world, we'll come with persecutions, but secondly, it will come with the Spirit, which is point two. So, in the rest of verse four in your Bibles, have a look there.

[12 : 18] Jesus says, I did not tell you from these things from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me.

None of you ask me, where are you going? Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly, I tell you, it is for your good that I am going.

Unless I go away, the advocate will not come to you, but if I do go, I will send him to you. Remember, it's the Thursday night before the very first Good Friday when Jesus was crucified.

He's about to go back to the Father. In fact, he's been speaking all night about leaving them to go to the Father. But instead of asking Jesus what this means, namely, having to suffer the cross first before going to the Father, the disciples are filled with grief for themselves.

They're preoccupied about what it means for them. But instead of getting annoyed at their self-centeredness, Jesus comforts them by telling them it's for their good. How?

[13 : 32] Or so that Jesus can send the Spirit to help them in their work of sharing the gospel. At the moment, Jesus is just traveling around with them in Israel.

But when the Spirit comes, the Spirit can work all over the world. Doing what? Well, verse 8, when He comes, He will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.

About sin because people do not believe in me. About their shallow righteousness because I'm going to the Father so the Spirit will now convict them of that. and about judgment because the Prince of this world now stands condemned.

You see, if Jesus goes, then these apostles can work all over the world for the Spirit will be sent to them and also to everyone all over the world to convict them of sin, of their fake righteousness like the Pharisees, their hypocritical righteousness and judgment.

And so as we go out into the world to tell people about Jesus in various ways whether big or little, we're not apostles, but I take it the fact that the Spirit is going all over the world and it continues to do that today when the 11 apostles are no longer with us means that this promise is for us.

[14 : 58] So as we go out into the world and share bits and pieces about Jesus as our opportunities arise, the Spirit will work in people's lives, proving them wrong, convicting them of sin and being worthy of judgment, converting them to Jesus.

You see, even though the world hates Jesus and the Father, God has not given up on the world. And even though the world hates Christians, God will cause by His Spirit some of them to become Christians that they might be saved.

It's why we pray for our non-Christian family and friends, is it not? That God's Spirit might convict their hearts, prove them wrong about their ideas of sin, righteousness and judgment, that they might realize they need a Savior and so turn to Christ and be saved.

This means, though, that we're not alone as we seek to share Jesus. In fact, it's kind of freeing really when you think about it because it's not up to us to convict or convert our family and friends, is it?

The Spirit does that. We're just to love, pray and take whatever opportunities arise to share Jesus with them. But the Spirit will not only convict and convert people, He will also guide these eleven apostles into all truth.

[16 : 26] So have a look at verse 12 to 15. He says, I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear, but when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.

He will not speak on His own, He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that He will receive what He will make known to you.

All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what He will make known to you. Notice in verse 12 here that Jesus is speaking specifically to the eleven who cannot bear at this moment to hear anymore.

The eleven who, back in chapter 15, were those who were with Jesus from the beginning. And when the Spirit comes, He will guide these eleven into all truth, including Paul, the apostle, whom he will later call.

But notice, it's not some truth. The Spirit will guide into all truth. And so it's not as though we need more apostles today to give us more truth, you see.

[17 : 39] And we need to remember this because there is an increasing amount of churches, even some in our city, whose ministers call themselves apostles or prophet and apostles, where they say that they have more revelation, more truth to give.

In fact, there's a whole church movement called the New Apostolic Church, where the ministers are apostles. It's a bit like the Pope and so on. And so we need to remember this, that the Spirit guided all the eleven apostles into all truth.

We don't need more apostles to give us more truth. So if I or anyone else here at H2D starts calling ourselves an apostle, pour a bucket of cold water overhead, wouldn't you? But for us, this means we can have great confidence that what we have from the apostles like John here in the Bible is the truth.

Because the Spirit will not only speak, sorry, the Spirit will only speak to them what he hears from Jesus. And verse 15, all that Jesus has is from the Father.

And so there's this unbroken chain of truth. I've got a slide for it there. You know, it's from the Father who gives everything to the Son, and then the Son tells the Spirit who only speaks what he hears from Jesus, and then the Spirit helps and inspires the eleven plus poor, and then to the Bible for us.

[19 : 12] And so you see, we can be confident, absolutely confident, that what you have in your hot little hand, I mean, I can't see you all, so I'm assuming you have a Bible in your hand, what you have in your hand, the Bible is the truth.

So we're not wasting our time tuning in to a live stream to still hear the Bible read and explained, because it is the truth, we can be confident about it. And we're not wasting our time seeking to put it into practice.

Well, life in this world comes with trouble, so don't be surprised, but be forewarned so you are forearmed. And life in this world also comes with the Spirit, Spirit, who convicts and converts, so we're not alone in evangelism, but also who guided the eleven into all truth, so we can be confident that the Bible is the truth.

And thirdly, and finally, which will be a bit shorter, I also realised this morning that on the live stream, you can turn me off whenever you like, so I'll keep going. So on the third slide, sorry, the third point here, life in this world also comes with joy and peace, so take heart.

Verse 16, Jesus starts to speak about his death and resurrection. He says in verse 16, in a little while you will see me no more. He's about to die.

[20 : 34] And then after a little while, three days in fact, you will see me, his resurrection. But the disciples are not sure what he's talking about.

So Jesus continues, so skip down to verse 20 for a moment. Verse 20, very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices.

You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. You see, the world rejoiced at Jesus' death. I'm sure the Jewish leaders congratulated themselves while the disciples we know did mourn.

And yet a little while later, three days later, their grief turned to joy, didn't it? When they saw Jesus again. And their joy was such that they forgot their grief like a mother.

In childbirth, so verse 21, Jesus says, a woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come to give birth. But when the baby is born, she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child has been born into the world.

[21 : 44] Now, I'm not sure if this is true for all mothers. I've never given birth myself. And the last time I made a comment to my wife, Michelle, about childbirth not being too hard, I regretted it before it was even out of my mouth.

She was kind, though. But I take it when they see the child, then the agony they've even just gone through often fades in memory.

And I also take it, perhaps most mothers, even after the child is born, you know, slowly forget what was, I mean, they remember, I assume, but they must forget, otherwise they'd never go back for a second and third child, would they?

Well, verse 22, do so with you, says Jesus. Now is your time for grief, but I will see you again, he says to 11, and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

When Jesus rises from the dead, their grief will turn to joy, for they will see their Lord alive. And I take it this joy is also for us because Jesus remains risen, doesn't he?

[22 : 52] But why does Jesus' resurrection bring us joy? Well, because his resurrection signals that his death really did pay for our sins. It's like making a cake.

You mix the ingredients together, you put it in the oven, in the tomb, if you like, but it's not until you bring it out and see it risen that you know it's worked. Well, so too, when Jesus was seen risen from the tomb, we know his death worked, that he really did pay for our sins at the cross so that we can have, I was going to say we can have our cake and eat it too, but we can have something much better.

We can have a relationship with God such that he will one day raise our physical bodies from the dead. We can have a relationship with God which means he will never leave us nor forsake us as we heard in our first reading.

He'll always be with us now in this life and always hear our prayer which brings joy. Do you see verse 23? In that day when I rise from the dead you will no longer ask me anything.

Very truly I tell you my father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Understand now that you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.

[24 : 10] Now when Jesus says we will receive whatever we ask for in his name it doesn't mean it's a blank check. You know that I'll get my Ferrari if I just pray in Jesus name.

That turns his name into like a magical charm like abracadabra or something like that. Rather the name represents a person's character. And so to pray in Jesus name here is to pray in line with his character, his will.

That's when we'll receive those things and find our joy made complete. For example I remember in high school praying for God to help me control my language. Which is what Jesus wants for us all says the Bible.

And over time he helped me to stop saying things that were inappropriate and please him more with my words. And that actually brought me joy. I was grateful that I could please God in this way.

Or we were praying for a guy whose family was coming to our church or they still come to become a Christian. Several of us were praying. It took a long time several years.

[25 : 14] But he did become a Christian and it brought us all great joy. Or when someone was suffering greatly they prayed that God would help them keep trusting in him and God answered their prayer such that they found real contentment despite their hardship.

And so they found joy even in trouble. That's how it seems to work. But I think part of the joy is also realising the privilege we have. That's what Jesus seems to go on to speak about in verse 26.

He says, In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

Jesus is saying, look, I'm not going to have to ask for you. You can just go directly to God himself. For God loves you since you've believed in me.

And so God wants us to come to him in prayer. Now we might not think that brings much joy because perhaps we've forgotten the extraordinary privilege that is to have a relationship with God and come to him in prayer anytime, anywhere.

[26 : 25] I remember vividly praying with a mate when we were both about 18 years old, so only a few years ago. It's hard with this streaming to make jokes and so on.

I was actually thinking maybe we should put a little laughter thing like they do on sitcoms, but anyway, it doesn't matter. But I remember praying with him and he prayed this. He said, thank you that we can call you, who is the whopping creator of the universe, Father.

It was the word whopping that first caught my attention, but as I thought about it, I realized what my friend realized. That it's an extraordinary privilege to have direct access to the creator of the universe.

I mean, just ponder that for a moment. Does that not bring us joy? This is the relationship that Jesus opened up for us by his death and resurrection, a relationship that brings joy, but his death and resurrection also brings us peace.

In verses 29 to 30, the disciples think they now get Jesus and believe in him, but their faith is still very young. So Jesus tells them in verse 32 that they will actually end up scattering and desert him when he's arrested in an hour's time or so.

[27 : 39] But have a look at the last verse there. Verse 33. Jesus returns to the idea of trouble in the world and he says, I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world. In Jesus we can have peace. The peace of knowing that no matter what trouble we face in the world, he has already triumphed.

For by his death and resurrection he has overcome the world and secured our future and fellowship in him. So no matter what the world throws at us, we can have peace.

If the world persecutes us, we can have the peace of knowing that in the end we will win. If the world throws our lives upside down, we can have the peace of knowing that God loves us and will never leave us nor forsake us.

Perhaps you're quite enjoying this live streaming business. You know, you get to sleep in a bit, stay in your pyjamas, have your own coffee and as I said before, turn me off whenever you like. But if this disease in our world continues for a long time, this social distancing I suspect will cause us a bit of heartache.

[28 : 55] And yet, because we are in Christ, then we can have the peace of knowing that nothing, not even social distancing, can break our unbreakable fellowship in him.

For Christ has overcome the world and secured our future and fellowship with him. And so to finish, as we live in this world, we're to live with the right expectations.

We're to expect that there will be persecution, so not to give up, but being forewarned is to be forearmed. And we're to expect the Spirit to work in our world, not only helping us to follow Jesus, but convicting and converting others, so we are free to play our part in evangelism, knowing it doesn't rest on our shoulders.

And thirdly, we're to expect joy and peace, even amidst the trouble in our world. For by his death and resurrection, Jesus has opened up a relationship with God for us and overcome the world.

Verse 33, In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I've overcome the world. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 18] We thank you that he helps us to have right expectations of life in our world, that we might not be discouraged or disheartened, but actually take heart, remembering that he has overcome the world.

Help us in this we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.