

Strength for a Troubled World

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Date: 06 April 2014

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[0 : 00] Well, do keep your Bibles open there and you should have an outline somewhere in what you were given tonight. It is great to be here. I'm really loving getting to know Holy Trinity and it's great to finally be here at 6pm with you guys.

These are wonderful chapters we're looking at together in John 2. Jesus is preparing his disciples for events that he knows are coming. His death, his resurrection and departure. And so it's a good long speech which is helpful for us to look at I think.

Last week Jimmy spoke about abiding in Jesus, loving as Jesus loves and particularly loving one another. This week I think the focus shifts to preparing the disciples for the response, not that they'll get from one another, but that they will get from the world.

And it won't be love, but the opposite, hate. You'll notice in 16 verse 1, Jesus doesn't expect life after he's gone to be easy.

He tells them that these things so they will not fall away. And also in 16 verse 4, so that when times of persecution come, they'll remember that he has warned them about it.

[1 : 15] I suspect that even if you've only been a Christian for a little while, you'll know something about the world's response. You'll know it can be hard. You've probably got friends and family who don't want to know about God and don't want to hear.

And so I hope tonight's passage will be encouraging for you. Why don't I pray for us? Gracious God, thank you so much for your son, Jesus. Thank you that he came not only to die for us, but to teach us about you.

Thank you for this wonderful passage where he prepares his disciples for after he's left and he prepares them to go out into the world. Teach us tonight to have a right approach, to act the way you want us to act and to rely on you and your spirit.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, before we get away in the passage here, I think it's helpful if we define what the world means. And we can look at that by having a look elsewhere in John.

If you could flick back to chapter 1 in John, in your Bibles. I'm not sure what page it's on, sorry. And in verse 9, it's speaking about Jesus and says, The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

[2 : 37] It seems to be talking about a physical world here. And verse 10 continues, He was in the world, seems physical, and though the world was made through him, again it seems physical, but notice this bit, the world did not recognise him or know him.

It's a relational term, a people term. And verse 11 continues, He came to that which was his own, but his own, you could say people, did not receive him.

So that's one bit. Flick forward a little bit in John to chapter 3. And starting at verse 19, it says, This is the verdict.

Light, that's Jesus, has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear their deeds will be exposed.

So I think Don Carson gives a useful definition of the world. In John, he defines it as the inhabited world in rebellion against its creator. The inhabited world in rebellion against its creator.

[3 : 47] The world then is people who don't recognise Jesus, they don't receive him, and in their rebellion against their creator God would rather stay in darkness than come into light.

In fact, they hate the light and will not come into it for fear their deeds or their rebellion will be exposed. So I think if we turn back to chapter 15 now, it makes sense as we come to verse 18.

If the world hates you, Jesus says, that is, if those in rebellion against God don't love you, well, keep in mind, they hated me first.

In verse 19, it also makes sense of how the disciples can be physically in the world but not belong to it. It's because Jesus has chosen them out of their rebellion against God and into discipleship.

And so the boundary of the world is defined by how you respond to Jesus and how you relate to him. If you want to chase up another passage, you can look at chapter 7, verses 5 to 7, when Jesus is talking to his brothers and ask me about that afterwards if you'd like.

[5 : 01] So I think in this first section, in verses 18 to 25, Jesus wants his disciples to expect to get the same response as he did as they go out into the world.

And the first response is hate. After Jesus leaves the world, his disciples will be left in it and he wants them to notice the pattern of the world's responses to him because they need to know that it will be the same for them.

That's why he repeats at the start of verse 20, remember what I told you, a servant is not greater than his master. If it happened to me, it will happen to you. And I think he gives three reasons in verses 18 to 25 for why his disciples will be hated by the world.

Two of them we've already touched on. The first reason is it hated Jesus first. So if you look at verses 18 to 20, the if statements here are not actually hypothetical maybes, but in the Greek they're assumed to be true.

So verse 18 can be read, if the world hates you and it does, keep in mind it hated me first. And in the second half of verse 20, it can be read, if they persecuted me and they did, they will also persecute you.

[6 : 20] That's the first reason. And the second is one we've already mentioned as well. The disciples no longer belong to the world. Unlike the ifs we've just looked at, that if at the start of verse 19 is assumed to not be true.

So verse 19 can be read, if you belong to the world, which you don't, it would love you as its own. Jesus has chosen them out of their rebellion for discipleship.

The third reason that the world will hate Jesus' disciples is I think the reason which really stands behind all the others. It's because the world hates and does not know the Father who sent Jesus into it.

Have a look at verse 21. They will treat you this way, that is, they'll hate you or persecute you or respond in different ways because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.

Again, in verse 23, whoever hates me, hates my Father as well. So see, there's these kind of three stages of logic. When people hate the disciples, it's because they hated Jesus first and they hated Jesus because they hated and didn't know the Father.

[7 : 32] Or to put it another way, those in rebellion against the Creator hate the one that he sent, Jesus, and the one that he sends is sending out the disciples who will also be hated.

Notice too, in chapter 16, verse 2, how the examples Jesus gives point past the person and to God. The disciples will be put out of the synagogue.

I think that's for confessing the name of Jesus. If you want to chase that up, you can look at chapter 9, verse 22. And even someone who kills them will think they're offering service to God.

People are taking action against the disciples, but they're doing it because of what they think or believe about God and Jesus. I think there's another big point here in verses 22 to 25 though, and it's that this hatred is without reason or without any excuse.

The verses are a little bit difficult. Verses 22 to 25 is, at first they seem to be saying that if Jesus hadn't come into the world, then the world wouldn't be guilty of sin. But I think the focus here is not on whether the world has sin or not, but whether the world has any excuse for sin or reason for their sin.

[8 : 50] So look at the second half of verse 22. But now they have no excuse for their sin. And the second half of verse 24, as it is, they have seen, and yet they've hated both me and my father.

But this is to fulfill what was written in the law, they hated me without reason. So the focus here isn't on whether the world was morally perfect and in moral perfection before Jesus came.

We know that it wasn't. The focus is on the world's guilt for rejecting the divine revelation of God in Jesus and brought through Jesus.

Even though Jesus has come and spoken to them about himself and God, even though they've actually seen him, they still didn't love him. So they are totally and completely without excuse.

They've hated him without reason, just like David's enemies hated David without reason in Psalm 69, which is what's quoted here. In Romans 1, Paul says that all people are without excuse for their rejection of God.

[9 : 57] Even from creation, God's eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen. If you look through the Gospel of John, you see many times when people saw and should have seen who Jesus is.

They saw his miracles, they heard him speak and yet they didn't believe. Just like in Ezekiel's day, the Israelites should have known God and yet they were a rebellious nation against him.

So, at this point, you might think that Jesus would begin to coach his disciples in how to avoid this hatred and be loved instead.

After all, he's had a lot of experience with it during his ministry. He must have some good techniques. Surely he could say, here's how to fit in and not get noticed. Here's some situations to avoid and you won't be hated.

Perhaps, here's a list of safe things that you could say about me, but don't say these other things. They're very provocative. If I reflect on my own experience as a Christian, I could probably contribute things to those lists, I think.

[11 : 09] Here's good ways to stay safe. If you do this though, watch out. You're going to get a response. But it's not what Jesus does. Instead, I think the third point here is Jesus expects his disciples to continue doing what exposed the world's hate of him.

He expects them to continue to teach and testify. And thankfully, he promises help with this. So look at verses 26 and 27 of chapter 15.

Jesus says, when the advocate, you could translate that helping presence or spokesperson, 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 disciples know something the world needs to know and they must share it.

They know Jesus' teaching and they must testify. They won't be alone since the Spirit of truth will also testify about Jesus. In fact, you may have noticed in verse 20 of chapter 15, Jesus has already assumed that his disciples will be teaching.

- [12 : 29] And notice, it's not only responses of hatred and persecution which will be copied over from Jesus to his disciples, it's also keeping their word, responding positively to their teaching.

Jesus says, if they persecuted me and they did, they will also persecute you. If they obeyed my teaching or kept my word, and some of them did, they will also obey yours.

Therefore, Jesus, I think, sends his disciples out into the world expecting them to continue to do what he did, to teach and to testify. But he's saying, as you teach and testify about me, don't expect to be loved.

In fact, expect the opposite. Expect to be hated. If people hated me, they'll hate you too. But if they kept my words, if they obeyed my teaching, they will keep yours.

Later on in chapter 17, you could flick forward if you like, in John, Jesus prays for his disciples and he says to the Father in verse 15, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

- [13 : 43] And in verse 18, as you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. And that's what I think is happening here. Jesus isn't preparing them to avoid hate.

He's preparing them for it. He isn't preparing them to be silent and safe, but instead I think to be loving and luminescent. I'll come back to that in a minute.

I think the image Paul uses of himself in 2 Corinthians 5, verses 18 to 21, is helpful here. As an ambassador of Christ, he describes himself.

He says, all this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We're therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God is making his appeal through us. If you think about an ambassador, the treatment that the ambassador receives as they represent their king or their country, are actually messages that point past them to the person that they're representing.

- [14 : 59] Yet God uses us in this ministry of reconciliation, which is centred on Jesus. It's such a grand calling. Now I think in the second half of the passage here, chapter 16, verses 5 to 15, we see why Jesus is saying all this and we see two things the Spirit does which help us.

In verse 5, Jesus is saying all this because he knows he is going to him who sent me, to the Father. But after he's gone, he will send the advocate to his disciples.

And in verse 7, he says something I actually think is pretty surprising at first. Jesus says, it's for the disciples' good or to their advantage that he goes so he can send the advocate, the Spirit of truth.

What is going on? Wouldn't have been my first thought. I think the point here is that it's because the Spirit will expose the truth about Jesus to both the world and to us.

Jesus continues in verse 8, when he comes, the advocate, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment. This means, I think, the Spirit will do what the world, those in rebellion against God, are most afraid of.

- [16 : 22] The word prove here could also be translated as expose. The Spirit will expose the world's wrongness. If you flick back to John chapter 3 with me, you see the same idea and even the same word, the Greek word, is used in 3 verse 20, which we looked at earlier.

Starting in verse 19, it says, this is the verdict, light, Jesus, has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear their deeds will be, here's the word, exposed or proved evil.

We said then that their deeds, their evil deeds were rebelling against their creator to God, rejecting him. If you flick back now to chapter 16, notice in verse 9 what the really big sin is.

This big sin that the Spirit of truth will prove the world to be wrong about. Often we have a catalogue of big sins. they're not always right. The big sin here is people do not believe in Jesus.

Jesus who was sent by the Father. In verse 10 we see people don't see that the only way to be right with God is through Jesus. They're wrong about righteousness.

[17 : 47] In verse 11 people don't see that Jesus is the only prince and every other one is condemned. So the first advantage is the Spirit does all the heavy lifting I think in testifying and teaching about Jesus to the world.

Now I've often thought wouldn't it be great to have Jesus physically beside me as I'm trying to tell my mates about him.

Wouldn't that be amazing? Wouldn't it be easy? Shouldn't it be easy? But when I think that I'm forgetting the world hated Jesus first. Even when Jesus was physically present people disbelieved him.

He was persecuted and he was ultimately killed. Without the Spirit's testimony about Jesus people will never truly see who he is.

So the first advantage of Jesus going and the Spirit coming is the Spirit does all the heavy lifting in teaching and testifying for us. I think the second advantage though relates to us.

[18 : 58] Jesus has already spoken about the Holy Spirit in chapter 14 you might remember from a few weeks back and just like chapter 14 Jesus promises the Advocate the Spirit of Truth will come when he goes away.

You remember that to have eternal life means you have the presence of the Holy Spirit within you. The Spirit lives in believers and inwardly teaches them. He guides them in the truth the truth about the way the truth and the life Jesus.

In 14 verse 26 he says but the Advocate the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send you in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

And notice the similarities between that and verses 12 to 15 in chapter 16 that we're looking at tonight. Here Jesus 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 the truth or perhaps in all the truth.

And notice whose words the Spirit will teach. Jesus says he will not speak on his own he will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is to come.

[20 : 09] He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. And notice that the ultimate source is the Father all that belongs to the Father is mine and that is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.

The Spirit again does all the heavy lifting. He exposes the truth about Jesus to both the world and us. Outwardly he proves the world to be wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment while inwardly for believers he teaches and guides us in the truth about Jesus.

Well I'd like to conclude back in John chapter 3 this has been a talk about John chapter 15 and Job chapter 3 but we'll go back there John 3.16 it's a very famous verse we often understand it to be talking about how big God's love is how much love God has God so loved the world but I think it's first about the way in which God loved the world how he loved as well as how much he loved it says for God so loved the world in other words this is the way God loved people in rebellion against him how did he do it that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life it shows us the depth of God's love he was prepared to send his son Jesus to die but I think the focus is firstly on how God loved by sending his son in the first place look at the way verse 17 continues about God sending Jesus into the world for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him so I think in today's passage we've been seeing

Jesus prepare his disciples for being sent into the world just like he was Jesus was sent because of the father's love just like I think we are we're sent out as ambassadors of reconciliation disciples of the true king sent to teach and testify about him in what we do and say not to be silent and safe but loving and luminescent but Jesus wants his disciples to know don't expect to be loved as you testify about the lordship of Jesus with your words and actions in fact expect the opposite to be hated but knowing this love others by risking their hate remembering that we only know the father because he loved us first even when we were his enemies you may not feel up to the task

I often perhaps rarely do but remember we're not alone the spirit of truth is sent out with us and he does all the heavy lifting why don't I pray a gracious father we thank you that you sent your son into the world not to condemn it but to save it thank you that even when we hated you you loved us thank you that we know you because someone told us about Jesus and you taught us the truth about him by your word and your spirit help us father to love our friends and family in the same way you have loved us give us courage to testify about your son Jesus to live with him as our Lord and to look for opportunities to tell others about him when we can when we are hated remind us of Jesus words that they hated him first and it's about your name and not ours but give us courage to love others by risking their hate to be loving and luminescent father we pray for our friends make them see that ignoring you is hating you and bring them to see Jesus as he truly is and to believe in his name we ask and pray all these things in

[24 : 41] Jesus powerful name amen thank you and thank you for