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Costly Witness

John 15.26-16.4

Series: Signs of Life

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I. **The World's Hatred**

- A. Last message
 - 1. Latter section of John 15
 - a. Explored the world's hatred of Christians
 - 2. Know the word hate is a strong word
 - a. But we unpacked that section and learned a great deal about the troubled relationship between the world and the believing people of God
- B. Learned
 - 1. World as used in this section is not so much people
 - a. But the world system which is antagonistic to God
 - b. The world's values are not God's values
 - c. The world's philosophies seek to supplant God with other paltry substitutes
 - d. The world's aspirations are not God's desires for humankind
 - e. The pleasures of the world are not the pleasures God intends for human flourishing
 - f. The activities and pastimes of the world are not the activities and pastimes that please God
 - 2. **World hates Christians** for several reasons
 - a. **Association with Christ** whom the world hates
 - b. **Not of the world**; chosen out of the world
 - c. Persecuted **For the sake of the name** of Christ; Christians always seek to exalt Jesus Christ, the last Being in the universe the world wants to exalt
 - 3. **World hates Christ**
 - a. Hates **Christ's word**; His word exposes the sinfulness of their speech and actions
 - b. Hates **Christ's works**; His works vindicate His claim that He is the incarnate Son of God
 - 4. The world is guilty for their hatred
 - a. 15.22 – there is no excuse for their sin
 - b. The world hates Christ for it
 - c. The world hates Christians because of our association with Jesus Christ
- C. It's not easy to swallow these hard facts about Christian's relationship with the

world

1. We have learned to be comfortable in the world
 - a. We live in a world where our needs are met
 - b. Where by and large there is peace
 - c. Where our circumstances can be managed
 - d. Where we have cordial relationships with people who don't share our faith
 - e. So we might have a hard time believing such antagonism exists
2. On the other hand, if you're like me, you wonder whether we've compromised our faith so much that we have become immunized to the antagonism
 - a. That the reason I'm so comfortable in the world is that I've become like the world in its values, aspirations, and pleasures
 - b. That I haven't been bold enough in my proclamation of Jesus
 - c. I wonder, why haven't I suffered as a Christian
3. Of course, we know that the rest of the world is not like our little bubble
 - a. The USA is like Disneyworld compared to the rest of the world
 - b. Where to be a Christian has serious consequences
 - c. Where Christians are routinely imprisoned or murdered
 - d. Where martyrdom is commonplace
 - e. Where to convert to Christianity from another religion means loss of employment, family, freedom and even life
4. And we recognize, that as much as we love this country, the general moral direction of our nation is more and more antagonistic to the values, aspirations, and conduct of biblical Christianity
5. We do find that we are at odds with the world when we take the time to examine the issues
 - a. Honestly and transparently assess our walk with the Lord
 - b. And understand how the world wants you to conform to its mold (Romans 12.2)

D. But one of the most difficult aspects of this troubling relationship with the world is when we discover that the enmity is right in our midst

1. That the enmity shows up in the people of faith
 - a. That the focus of antagonism is with religious people
 - b. That the enemy turns out to be the church
2. That's the essence of where Jesus takes this discourse in our text

II. Text

A. **John 15:26-27** (NASB95) —

1. 26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.
2. **John 16:1-4** (NASB95) —
 - a. 1 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.

- b. 2 “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.
 - c. 3 “These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.
 - d. 4 “But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.
- B. Structure of this section
- 1. **John 15.18-25 – The World’s Hatred of Christians and Christ**
 - 2. **John 15.26-27 – The Christian’s Help in the World**
 - 3. **John 16.1-4 – The Religious World’s Hatred of Christians**
- C. Purpose for this section
- 1. **John 16:1,4** (NASB95) —
 - a. John 16:1 (NASB95) — 1 “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.
 - b. 4 “But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them....”
 - 2. Jesus is preparing His disciples for the trouble that will surely come
 - a. From the world in general
 - b. And from their own religious communities
- D. Exposit the text backwards today
- 1. Look first at the religious world’s hatred of Christians
 - a. In which Jesus Forewarns His disciples
 - 2. Then look at the assistance Christ promises to His people
 - a. In which Jesus Forewarns His disciples

III. **Forewarned**

- A. **John 16:2** (NASB95) —
- 1. 2 “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue...”
 - 2. It’s as if Jesus, in speaking about the world’s hatred of Christians and of Christ, is speaking in Chapter 15 in general terms – from 35,000 feet
 - a. But then in Chapter 16 He zeroes in on His target with laser-like accuracy
 - b. The specific part of the world He warns about is the religious world
 - c. In fact – the very religious world of which the disciples are a part
 - d. The Jewish religious world
 - e. The local Jewish religious world
 - f. The synagogue itself
 - g. The church!
- B. **Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing**
- 1. **Excommunication**
 - a. And the first thing He calls attention to is what we today in the church world would call excommunication
 - b. “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue”

- c. In other words, they will throw you out of your local church
- d. When church bodies do that officially today – hopefully for legitimate disciplinary reasons, for serious and unrepentant sin, and according to principles described by Jesus Himself in Matthew 18 – the instruction is to treat the unrepentant church member as an unbeliever – not even to fellowship with them
- e. Such an occasion is rare indeed; but the process itself is legitimate and called for under specific warranted circumstances
- f. But in this case the excommunication is for the Jewish leader’s rejection of the incarnate Son of God Himself – the One God sent to save them from their sin!
- g. In other words, the very excommunicators are the ones who should be excommunicated!
- h. Today for the church excommunication has lost much of its power
- i. There are multiple churches in most every community; and excommunicated church members can easily, if they want to, just go to another church
- j. Or to no church at all – church membership in our culture is not seen to be as integral to life in a community as it once was
- k. But in Jesus’ day, there was usually one synagogue in most communities
- l. Membership in the synagogue was an integral aspect of belonging to a community
- m. The threat of being thrown out was not a small matter
- n. It was to be separated from the spiritual life of Israel – no worship, sacrifices
- o. No reading of scriptures (for the only way one could ever hear the word of God was in the synagogue worship)
- p. It meant losing the social life of the community – the excommunicated person was not just restricted from participation, but shamed
- q. It affect one’s economic well being – opportunities for trade and business relationships were severely restricted
- r. And in fact, families would cast one out as a result of excommunication for the reproach and embarrassment they would bring on their parents and brothers and sisters
- s. Even the right of a proper burial would be lost
- t. We’ve seen such an episode right in the Gospel of John
- u. The man born blind whom Jesus healed (John 9)
- v. Recall that the Pharisees grilled the parents of the man about his healing and they refused to answer questions because they were afraid of being thrown out of the synagogue
- w. The healed man himself was thrown out; and he wandered about aimlessly until Jesus and His disciples took him into their new community

- x. Bottom line – the religious community of Jews hated Jesus, hated Christians
- y. And to be a Jewish Christian was anathema to them; they couldn't bear the thought of it
- z. "Jewish-Christian" was an oxymoron to them!
- aa. But to Jesus "Jewish-Christian" should seem as normal a combination as peanut butter and jelly!
- bb. But that's not all – they would not only put you outside the synagogue – they could kill you!

2. **Murder**

- a. **John 16:2** (NASB95) — 2 "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God."
- b. "Everyone who kills you"
- c. And this was no hyperbolic punditry on the part of Jesus
- d. And no small threat
- e. They actually did exactly that with Stephen – stoned him to death
- f. Some people may think from the story in Acts 7 that they stoned him for preaching too long of a sermon; there's no truth to that
- g. No – they stoned him because he preached Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders
- h. And the religious people couldn't stand that!
- i. And don't forget Paul – before he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus he stood approving of Stephen's murder
- j. And went about Judea rounding up Jewish Christians – arresting them, throwing them into prison
- k. Some of them presumably murdered as well
- l. It was this grand persecution flowing from the synagogues that prompted the dispersion of Jewish Christians out of Judea into Samaria and the surrounding areas

3. **Motivation**

- a. Why would they do such things – excommunication and murder?
- b. **John 16:2** (NASB95) — 2 "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God."
- c. Such religious authorities actually believe they are doing God's work when they excommunicated and killed Jews who have become Christians
- d. And the same can be true today
- e. Christians are often persecuted by the church when they preach Jesus and hold to the true gospel
- f. That's especially true when Christians affirm and uphold biblical ethics over against the world's convoluted ethics – especially in the areas of sexuality and freedom of conscience
- g. Boice: Persecutors always claim to be the true church, the people

of God, but the claim alone does not make it so. There is an old German proverb that says, “Not all who carry long knives are cooks.” In the same way, not all who lay claim to the title “church” are *the* church. Not all who wear ecclesiastical garb and who preach sermons are God’s ministers.

- h. Boice: The weakness of the churches in our time is that those within the various denominations will not evaluate the opinions and programs of those denominations by the Word of God and then stand against all that is in opposition to it. So long as this is true the churches will never be strong. Moreover, there will be persecution.
- i. These are exactly the issues Jesus has in mind
- j. **John 16:3** (NASB95) — 3 “These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.”
- k. The “they” Jesus refers to are not the secular people; not the Romans; not the pagans
- l. “They” refer to the Jewish religious authorities – the clergy
- m. They were the ones who led the charge against Jesus and against Jesus followers
- n. They were the ones who persecuted the church
- o. The religious people
- p. The influential religious people
- q. And they did not know Jesus nor the Father!

4. **Purpose**

- a. The good news is that even in these troubling and wicked circumstances, there is purpose
- b. **John 16:4** (NASB95) — 4 “But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them...”
- c. Jesus is properly warning His disciples
- d. So they would know, when the persecution happens, they wouldn’t be surprised; they wouldn’t be shocked; they wouldn’t be caught off guard
- e. How are we to respond to the persecution and oppression when it happens?
- f. Should we, in despair, wring our hands and cry out in desperation, saying “How could this happen to us? How could this happen in the US?”
- g. No! We should say, “This is exactly what Jesus said would happen!”
- h. “This confirms Jesus’ own words. This vindicates whom He says He is. He was spot on in His analysis”
- i. Jesus is here teaching us that the world hates Christians because the world hates Christ
- j. The world – the system of philosophies, aspirations, values, and conduct that is antagonistic to God

- k. That world hates Christians and hates Christ
- l. And the epicenter of that hatred is religious
- m. Often the very religious communities of which we are a part
- n. Jesus predicted it; it came to pass in the years following His death and resurrection
- o. And it continues to come to pass today
- 5. Consider yourself warned!
 - a. Warned by none other than Jesus Himself

IV. **Forearmed**

- A. But in addition to being forewarned, Jesus doesn't leave us hung out to dry
 - 1. He doesn't just consign us to an inglorious destructive end
 - a. He gives everything we need to prepare for the challenges
 - 2. He gives us a Helper; a Counselor; an Advocate; a Comforter
 - a. He gives us the Holy Spirit
 - 3. **John 15:26** (NASB95) — 26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me...”
 - 4. **Helper = parakletos (Gk)**
 - a. Kletos = to call
 - b. Para = beside
 - c. **Parakletos = to call along beside**
 - 5. The Helper is the Holy Spirit
 - a. He is the One called along beside to help us when we need His assistance
 - b. Which is *all the time!*
 - c. We need Him all the time
 - 6. Of all the translations of parakletos into English versions of the NT – Counselor, Advocate, Helper, Comforter – I especially like Comforter
 - a. Comforter derives from Latin
 - b. Com = with
 - c. Forte = strength
 - d. In musical terms, to play forte is to play with strength – which usually means loud
 - e. **Comforter = to call along beside for strength**
 - f. And if the persecuted church, the oppressed church, the disenfranchised church needs anything – it's strength
 - 7. Look at what the text tells us about this Holy Spirit and see why His strength is so necessary
- B. **The Helper**
 - 1. **His Authority**
 - a. **John 15:26** (NASB95) — 26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father...”
 - b. The Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and He comes from the Father
 - c. And so, when He comes He comes with the authority of God

Himself

- d. This is no second rate diplomat; this is no state department official
- e. This One comes from God Himself!
- f. In fact, the Holy Spirit is God
- g. There many ways the scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is God
- h. He is called the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ
- i. He hovered over the surface of the deep in the creation – thus participating in the Creation, bringing order out of the chaos
- j. He breathed life into the first human beings
- k. And the most explicit statement in the NT was during the episode of Ananias and Sapphira – who lied about their contribution to the church for needy saints from the property they had sold
- l. Peter tells them that they had lied to the Holy Spirit, and that they had not lied to men but to God!
- m. The Holy Spirit is God!
- n. And that’s who Jesus sends to you!
- o. To indwell you; to live in you
- p. To live in you, influencing you both to will and to do for God’s pleasure
- q. To captivate you; to motivate you; to enflame you with a passion to serve Christ
- r. So you have the very authority of God living in you!
- s. What greater preparation do we need as we brace ourselves for the pressure that will surely come – and in many ways has already come?

2. **His Character**

- a. And He is called the Spirit of truth
- b. **John 15:26** (NASB95) — 26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father...”
- c. We live in a world of lies; a world of obfuscation; a world of disinformation; a world of misdirection and distraction
- d. But the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth
- e. Satan is the father of lies; always has been and always will be
- f. You can’t turn on the TV for 15 minutes without hearing lies
- g. You have the biblical warrant, every time you hear such things, to declare the origin of such lies satanic
- h. But you have no way of discerning truth from lies without the ministry of the Spirit of truth
- i. You want to be filled with the Spirit – we should pray to be filled with the Spirit every time we turn on the TV, or every time we read or listen to commentary or punditry
- j. The Spirit alone is able, through the ministry of the Word, to discern the true from the false
- k. That is His character

- l. We need His strength
 - m. And we need His truth
3. **His Role**
- a. And then there is His role
 - b. **John 15:26** (NASB95) — 26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me...”
 - c. His role in providing us strength and truth is to point us to Christ
 - d. Jesus Christ is the One we exalt
 - e. And the Holy Spirit is our worship leader – leading us to Christ, teaching us about Christ, infusing us with the character of Christ, transforming us into the image of Christ
 - f. That’s why theologians have designated the Holy Spirit as the shy member of the Trinity
 - g. Not because He is somehow inferior to the Father and the Son – nothing could be further from the truth
 - h. God the Holy Spirit has all the qualities and attributes of God the Father and God the Son
 - i. But He is called the shy member of the Trinity because His role is to point us to Christ, the incarnate Son of God
 - j. He brings to mind the person of Christ
 - k. He reminds of the teaching of Christ
 - l. He fills us with the character of Christ
 - m. What incredible armament we have for our spiritual battle
 - n. We have the strength of the paraclete
 - o. We have the authority of God
 - p. We have the character of the Spirit of truth
 - q. We have the Spirit of Christ Himself living in us
 - r. Why should we despair?
4. **His Agents**
- a. Then the text concludes with the application
 - b. Usually the preacher tries to figure out an application
 - c. But in this case, Jesus gives it to us plainly
 - d. **John 15:26–27** (NASB95) — 26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”
 - e. “And you will testify also...”
 - f. The Holy Spirit will testify about Christ
 - g. But His testimony, by indwelling in each believer, spills over into our testimony
 - h. “And you will testify also...”
 - i. This obviously refers to those original disciples: “... because you have been with Me from the beginning.”
 - j. But those who have been with Jesus from the beginning did indeed

- testify – we have their testimony recorded in the NT
- k. And the same Holy Spirit promised to them is promised to us!
 - l. And we take their testimony, and by the power of the Spirit, proclaim Jesus to a world
 - m. A world antagonistic to God
 - n. Even a religious world which hates the Christ of the Bible and of those who associate themselves with this Christ
 - o. But a world desperate for redemption
 - p. A redemption that can only come by faith alone in Christ alone
 - q. We are the agents of the Holy Spirit; Ambassadors of God
 - r. Delivering a message that, in spite of the world's hatred, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself!

V. Conclusion

- A. Jesus paints no idyllic picture of the Christian life in this section of John
 - 1. He gives us no rose colored glasses
- B. We will face opposition
 - 1. The world – that anti-God system of thinking, aspirations, and values – hates Christ and hates all who have clung to Him by faith
 - 2. And the epicenter of that hatred – often stunningly – is religious; coming at us from our own faith communities
- C. How will we survive?
 - 1. Well, Jesus has forearmed us for the battle
 - a. He has given us the Holy Spirit
 - b. The Spirit of truth
 - c. Who fills us with the Spirit of Christ
 - d. And makes our witness of Christ powerful and effective
 - e. Even if we were to die in the process
- D. And the church has survived – through two millennia!
 - 1. From a scared little band of less than 120 disciples in Jerusalem
 - a. Run out of town and dispersed in Israel Palestine
 - 2. So that within a generation – by 70 AD in fact – the church of Jesus Christ had spread from one end of the Roman empire to the other
 - a. Even as far as Spain, maybe even the British Isles
 - b. Into North Africa
 - c. All the way to India
 - 3. And today through every continent in the world
 - a. Making inroads into the remaining unreached peoples
 - b. So that we may within another generation see the completion of the Great Commission
- E. How?
 - 1. Because, in spite of the opposition, oppression, and persecution
 - a. The Holy Spirit-driven church has effectively been witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ
 - 2. And you too are His witnesses!
 - 3. Revelation 12:11 (NASB95) — 11 “And they overcame him because of the

blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

- a. May we too be faithful by the word of our testimony – whatever the cost!