
The Gospel of John: That You May Believe

"Love in a Hating World"

John 15: 18-27

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

"We Christians sometimes buy into a lie. We assume that if we're not like those hateful, judgmental people who call themselves Christians, then the world will see that we're actually pretty reasonable folks and want to follow Jesus. We believe that if Christians just cleaned up our act, then Jesus could finally captivate the hearts and minds of our neighbors. The only problem with this view is that it has no basis in the example or teaching of Jesus." - Justin Taylor

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." - Matthew 5: 10-12"

"Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." - 1 John 3:13

"The love for equals is a human thing--of friend for friend, brother for brother. It is to love what is loving and lovely. The world smiles. The love for the less fortunate is a beautiful thing--the love for those who suffer, for those who are poor, the sick, the failures, the unlovely. This is compassion, and it touches the heart of the world. The love for the more fortunate is a rare thing--to love those who succeed where we fail, to rejoice without envy with those who rejoice . . . The world is always bewildered by its saints. And then there is the love for the enemy--love for the one who does not love you but mocks, threatens, and inflicts pain. The tortured's love for the torturer. This is God's love. It conquers the world." - Frederick Buechner, *The Magnificent Defeat*

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered? What is God showing you about Himself and yourself in this passage?

Why might you find the hatred of the world a surprise? What does Jesus explain lies at the heart of the world's hatred?

How does the order of the Beatitudes from Matthew 5 not add up to our logic and consideration of how the world should work?

What is the difference between the offense of the cross of Jesus and "unnecessary" offense (or hatred with cause - verse 25)? How do we know the distinction?

What do you make of Jesus owning you for himself? How is that fact at once a conviction and a comfort? When do you experience that the most?

When have you had the opportunity to return hate for hate and yet have offered love in return for hate? What enabled such an act of love? How did it feel?