

Series: I Wish I'd Asked That; *Sermon:* "Why do people persecute Christians?"
Delivered on April 7, 2019, by **Dr. Josh Moody**, senior pastor

Bible text explored: John 15:18–16:4

15¹⁸"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²²If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

²⁶"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

16¹"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. [ESV]

Review and application:

1. Do you sense the world becoming increasingly antagonistic to Christian morals? What are a few specific ways you see this playing out?
2. How does this antagonism touch your life?
3. Can this be fixed by adjusting how you live in light of the suggestion that Christians not be so picky about moral issues today? Are there ways you could fit in better with the world? Is that a good goal? Would that help resolve this antagonism?

Pastor Josh identified 3 elements to help us understand and apply Jesus's teaching.

The reality of hate – 15:18-25

4. Looking for repetition is a key tool in studying God's Word. What do you learn from how Jesus uses repetition in 15:18-19?
5. How do you define "world" as Jesus uses this term? How would you compare Jesus's use of this term here with His use of that term in John 3:16?
6. How does Jesus explain that this hatred is unavoidably going to be their experience (and ours as well down through the millennia)?
7. What does Jesus say is the real issue? How did Jesus's death emphasize this reality?

An opportunity for witness – 15:26-27

8. "Witness" can mean a variety of things today. In the NT, "witness" and "martyr" come from the same Greek word. How did Stephen's death (Acts 7) provide "an opportunity for witness"?

9. Although “witness” may not carry that same fatal connotation in our lives in America (yet), can you name some opportunities God is giving you to give witness to His truth?
10. Pastor Josh offered a mnemonic to help you when facing spiritual opposition. Comparing it to the American Automobile Association (AAA) that you might call if your car breaks down, consider the following AAA when facing spiritual opposition:
 - Ask – ask God to help you through the power of His Holy Spirit and His Word. Can you think of a recent time when this was your first response to spiritual warfare?
 - Attitude — so easy to respond to hate with hate, to succumb to the temptation to hit back. How can you check your attitude, following the example of Christ (Luke 23:34) or Stephen (Acts 7:60)? How this might actually work in your life?
 - Actions — what we say, how we say it, what we did. Can you think of any recent examples when you took action in spiritual warfare?

A call to remember — 16:1-4

11. Pastor Josh referred to “a huge surprise in the text: Those who try to kill you will think they are doing service to God.” (16:2) How do you reconcile that with the observation that the biggest opposition to the Christian church today may be the fake church?
12. Discuss how these 3 questions can help you remember your lived reality today:
 - What are my expectations as a Christian in today’s world?
 - What’s the truth? It’s not about me, it’s really about God and Jesus
 - Am I still standing? Sometimes that’s the victory sign in our lives. (Eph 6:13)

Christians are living witnesses that speak to the need for a Savior. People of the world want to silence the Christian so they can silence the voice that is speaking that need into their life.