

The World at War (With Us) – Part II
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 15:18-27, John 16:1-4
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 15. We'll be looking again this morning at the last section of John 15, and the first four verses of John 16, which we began looking at last week. One of the great benefits of expositional preaching, expository preaching, just to be clear on that, expository preaching, you can really define it two ways. The first thing is that the text determines the content of the message, the text is sovereign. That is, God determines the content. The passage is an exposition if what you heard when someone taught from the passage isn't just them reading it, and then sort of bringing lots of other things in, maybe saying whatever they want to say, kind of using the Bible as a point of departure. But that the main points, and the main thrust of the message come from the text that is expounded. That is expository preaching.

But then there is another element that normally is referred to as expository preaching, and that is preaching consecutively through a book. One text leads to the next text, and so you don't skip a text. Sometimes you might want to skip a text. And this passage we have before us is one that, one of the beauties of that is that you end up preaching on things you would never choose to preach on. Through the years, as I've tried to expound the word of God, I've seen that. We come to passages that I say, "This is not a burden that I have naturally or something that I want to talk about naturally," but God wants it talked about, and there is great comfort.

Then we come to a passage like this where this is something that I probably would think about, and preach about, because I think that the days are increasingly ripe for this kind of message. We are talking about really preparing for persecution. That is what this passage is about, and I might think of that because I read the times, I mean, you see what is going on. You see that it is more and more uncomfortable to be a Bible-believing Christian. Just the very fact that you believe that God's word defines how you are to understand yourself sexually, for instance. That it is not up to you to determine how you feel, and you just change your gender. That puts us on the outside of where it seems like society is moving, and more and more people are buying into that kind of mindset. It makes us people who are accused of hate speech, and it is certainly a social faux pas, it may become a criminal act. It might! So we have to be prepared for that.

So I see that happening, but when I come to a passage like this expositionally, it gives me even greater comfort that it is not just me reading the signs, and telling you what I think, but it is God in His sovereignty bringing us His passage and saying, “I want this to be the agenda for the time of worship today.” The Lord is saying that, not me. And so, it is with that understanding that we come to this subject this morning. We titled the message last week, we will title it the same thing this week, ‘The World at War’. The world is at war with God. That is the clear teaching of the Bible, and in this passage in particular.

Now it is interesting, if we could have gone back and surveyed 1st Century Jews, and asked them, “Are you in a state of war with God?” Imagine that. We go to the temple, and we ask the high priest, and the priests, the Sadducees there at the temple, “Are you in a state of war with God?” They would say, “Are you mad? We love the God of the Old Testament. We’ve devoted our lives to His worship.” Or if we went to the Pharisees and we asked them, “Are you at war with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?” They would say, “Are you crazy? We’ve spent all of our time in His Scriptures, expositing them, understanding them, memorizing them. We tithe down to the smallest thing.” Jesus said they would tithe of their spices. The mint and the cumin, they would tithe of it. They were that meticulous in obeying the law. They fasted twice a week. The average Pharisee fasted two days a week. “Do you hate God?” “No, I don’t hate God.” And yet when God became flesh, and tabernacled among them, and they saw some of His glory, what did they do? They hated Him, they persecuted Him, and they killed Him.

The presence of God in flesh did not create the hatred, it exposed and revealed the hatred that was already there. The same way that an x-ray tells you what is going on inside, or a PET scan shows the existence of cancer, the presence of Jesus Christ revealed the condition of men’s hearts. And so those who were incredibly zealous religiously, in the name of God, did not know that they hated God until God showed up. They were a part, as all fallen men are, a part of the war with God, because man in his heart wants to be his own God, and that’s the rub. God will not abide with you if you want to be your own God. He is Lord, and there is no other. He doesn’t put up with rivals, and so if you want to maintain your own authority, and your own right to live as you please, to do what you want to do, you will do it apart from God. As C.S. Lewis has said:

Hell is God’s great monument to the free will of man.

“Your will be done forever,” God says. This passage is given to prepare us for the battles that we will inevitably face in this great cosmic world war. When you really understand the purpose of the passage, we’re going to see that it is actually to prepare us. Look with me at these verses, John 15:18, through John 16:4. Remember, Jesus is talking to His disciples on the night before He is crucified, and He says in Verse 18:

John 15:18-27 ~ “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, ‘THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.’

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.

John 16:1-4 ~ “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. 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. 3 These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 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.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we thank You for incredible kindness in speaking to us through Your perfect word. We pray that You would help us now, by the power of Your Spirit that you promised, the helper who has come, that Jesus has sent from the Father,

that the Father has sent. That He would help us to understand these things, to apply them to our hearts, to obey and submit, to love and to trust You, oh God. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

The purpose of the passage is really seen in the first verse of Chapter 16 when He says, ***“These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. “These things I have spoken to you... What He said in Verses 18-27, “I’ve said these things so that you will be kept from stumbling.” The ESV translates that ‘falling away’. “Because persecution, and hatred of the world will exert a powerful impact upon you, and you need to understand these things so that you will be kept from falling away. You need to know what is coming.”***

Last time we said we would look at this topic under four questions—three W’s and an H. *What? When? Why?* and *How?* Last time we looked at the first two, *What?* and *Why?* We said the first question that Jesus wants you to understand, so that you can be prepared for the battles that will inevitably come, and certainly they don’t come all the same way. I’m going to say a word about that before we jump into that. I’ll come back to the W’s and an H in a moment.

One of the things that we see is that our experience of persecution varies widely, doesn’t it? Individually, among even ourselves, and certainly when you think about geographically across the face of the earth. There are people who are dying for their faith all around the world, but not really here in America, not yet. But there are people who are, you know if you are in the Sudan, or even in places like Viet Nam, or Iran, or Saudi Arabia, your life could be on the line just like that, for Christ. So geographically, in the sovereignty of God, we are not in that experience at this point in time, and historically we’ve been, in America, in the last several centuries, in a very calm time historically.

Other people have been suffering, in fact you read statistics about how many martyrs there are, and it is a very complex question. The largest numbers, when you count everybody who names the name of Christ and is killed for it, they said that 70 million people died since the church was founded for Christ. Forty-five million, that’s over 2,000 years, 45 million died in the 20th Century. So 65 percent of all martyrs ever martyred died in the 20th Century in a 100-year period. The 21st Century, I think that is probably too high of an estimate, but it does show this incredible reality that has gone throughout history as Jesus said it would. A more reasonable estimate of recent years is that 100,000 people are dying a year in the 21st Century for their faith.

So now we are not experiencing that, but we might experience more persecution soon. When we said persecution, it doesn't just mean dying for your faith. It can be being hated, being ridiculed, being discriminated against because of your faith. But understanding that, we need to be prepared for it so that it doesn't unsettle us from our love for Christ. So Jesus is basically saying, "Listen, when you are in a war, think about this, the world is at war." If you lived through World War II, some of you probably did, or were alive when World War II was going on, the different circumstances that people experienced in World War II. Think about that.

If you lived in Holland in World War II, your experience was very different than if you lived in Indiana. In Holland, they were overrun by the Germans, and people were arrested all around them. I mean, soldiers died in the initial invasion as they tried to fight against Hitler, then they surrendered, and they are basically occupied for five years. So your circumstances would be radically different than somebody in Indiana, though war was hard for everyone. In Indiana, you had people who lost loved ones. So experience is different among Christians as well in the war, but the fact is, we all need to be prepared for it, so Jesus gives us this passage.

So we said the three W's and the H we want to look at—*What? Why? When?* and *How?* We looked at *What?* last time. What is your relationship to the world when you become a follower of Jesus Christ? We said that in a word the relationship is one of warfare. He promised us in this passage, "You will be hated. You will be persecuted." So that in truth everyone experiences some measure of that. Everyone, according to Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All who desire to live godly will suffer persecution." That in some way, you will suffer some antipathy, some hatred, some opposition at different times in your life from different people who reject you because you love Christ. You may not see it quite the same way.

In fact, we also have relationships with unbelievers who we witness to, we try to bring to faith, and they still love us. Sometimes they are family members. Sometimes they are friends. and a lot of people just love being around Christians because Christians are the best people to be around. "This person loves me. I want to hang around them." "Well, let me tell you why I love you. I love you because of Jesus." "I don't want to hear about that. Just keep loving me." And so you have those kinds of friendships, but what we're going to see, as we look at this passage, that hatred and this spirit of persecution, will come up in the heart of every unbeliever if you push on the right spot. You will be hated. You will be persecuted. That is *What?*

Why? Last time we said, *Why?* You are not of the world. You have been chosen out of the world. You bear the name of Christ. You reflect His character and when you reflect the character of Jesus, you remind them of God, the God they hate.

1) When?

So now we come to *When?* When will you experience it? When will persecution and this hatred flare up? What are the circumstances in which it does? So the word, the question today is *When?* Next time we plan to look at *How?* How we are to respond and the question *How?* But today, the question *When?* When should you expect increased hatred? When should you mentally be prepared for the potential of persecution? And what we are going to see is that the hostility of the world, and the hostility of unbelievers is a function of two variables according to Jesus in this passage. It is a function of two variables and so our points this morning, we have two points, the two variables that create the circumstances in which that hatred, or that desire to persecute comes out.

The two variables are number one, *The Brightness of the Light*, and secondly, *The Depth of the Darkness*. *The Brightness of the Light* and *The Depth of the Darkness*. These two things, when they come together, and then of course God's sovereignty ruling over all, He controls everything. So sometimes the light is bright, the darkness is deep, but they still don't do anything because He is reigning and ruling. He is always reigning and ruling, but sometimes He allows, for His glory, His people to experience suffering and hardship like we read about in 1 Peter 4, "Don't think it some strange thing when you encounter this fiery ordeal if something strange was happening to you." No, this is what we are called to do. We are called to share the sufferings of Christ, but these two variables really are the determining factors in whether or not you see that kind of hostility. *The Brightness of the Light* and *The Depth of the Darkness*. I've used the question *When?* because there are some key time markers in the passage, temporal markers, time markers that focus our attention on the time, a certain time. There are really two different ones. The first phrase I want to talk about is the phrase '*but now*'. It occurs twice in the passage. 'But now'. Verse 22:

John 15:22 ~ If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

Verse 24. Jesus says:

John 15:24 ~ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

So the issue is now. What is the circumstance? Jesus says, “Listen, you are about to see the greatest explosion of persecution that the world will ever know.” Why? Why is it now that this is going to happen? And He tells us. Look at those verses carefully, and what it is about is the light is the greatest that it has ever been. That is the first time marker. The second is the word ‘hour’. It occurs twice in John 16:2 and John 16:4. He says:

John 16:2 ~ 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.

There is an hour coming when the darkness will be so great that those who kill you who are the light of the world, when they kill you they will think they are serving God. In Verse 4 of Chapter 16:

John 16:4 ~ But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes,...

So I want us to look at those time markers under these two points. The first two, the ‘but now’, relates to that first point, when the light gets brighter. When ought you be prepared for increased hostility? When the light gets brighter. That is the first point. ‘But now’ in Verse 22 and Verse 24, basically Jesus is saying, explaining how the coming, His coming into the world radically revealed the true spiritual state of the Jewish people. I said earlier, if you had asked them, “Are you at war with God?” “No, of course not.” But Jesus comes, God comes and tabernacles right beside them, where they could see His glory up close, and what do they do? They reject Him. They hate Him.

A) The Brightness of the Light:

So you see this though in Verse 22 and Verse 24 because he says the same thing in both verses. In Verse 22, ***If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*** Verse 24, ***If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.*** The brightness of the light He is talking about. He says, “Listen, the reason that they are reacting the way they are is the light is becoming so intensely bright. The light is the revelation of

who God is.” And how had they seen who God is? Verse 22, in the words of Jesus, two sub-points under this one. When the light gets brighter, the light gets brighter through the words of Jesus, and the light gets brighter secondly, through the works of Jesus. Verse 22, Verse 24. See, in Verse 22 He says, ***If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*** Verse 24, ***If I had not done among them the works which no one else did...*** So you see? The words and the works.

a) Through the Words of Jesus:

It is interesting, both places, and I’m reading from the New American Standard, it says, ***...they would not have sin...*** Other translations say, ‘*would not have guilt*’. Literally in the Greek it says, ‘*they would not have sin*’. But of course, Scripture interprets Scripture, so what does this mean? It doesn’t mean that they had never sinned. What it means is they wouldn’t have the additional weight of now rejecting with full awareness, in a sense, God in the flesh. It’s really a key word there in Verse 22 when He says, ***...but now they have no excuse for their sin.*** The word translated ‘*excuse*’ there in Verse 22 is a very important word. It is a word that is hard to translate actually into the English. The King James translated it ‘*cloak*’. “They have no cloak for their sin.” The word literally means ‘*to appear before*’. It means ‘*to go before the appearance*’. And so, it is actually used a couple of different times in the New Testament, and translated ‘*pretense*’.

In Matthew 23:18, Jesus talking about the Pharisees says, “They make long prayers for a pretense. It is not really their heart to pray to God, but they make these long prayers, and these long prayers kind of go before them, and keep hidden the true nature of their hearts.” Paul uses the same word in Philippians 1:18 where he says, speaking about those who are preaching the Gospel for wrong motives, he says, “Whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached. I will glory in that. Some are preaching Christ for wrong motives. They don’t really want to preach Christ, they have other motives going on. And so the preaching of Christ is a pretense, it is that which goes before them to hide the true condition of their heart.” So when Jesus says, back in John 15:22, “When I came and spoke to them, they would not have sin.” What He means is, “I basically blew the lid off of the covering they were under. I blew away their pretense.” They were pretending to love God, but they did not love God. “And when I came and spoke to them, My words, the power of My words exploded that pretense,” and left them, in a sense, spiritually naked before God.

Think about how the words of Jesus confront. Remember that the reason they hate God is because they want to be their own gods. We all wanted to be our own god. Before you were saved, you wanted to be your own god, and the reality is, the old man in us still at times wants to be, doesn't he? We want our way, but the one who has been born again has within him a nature that wants to submit. So there is this battle at times going on inside of us. Before you are saved, there really is no battle. You want to serve yourself and only yourself. The only battle is how to do it best. And sometimes people do it through religion, as we see the Jews in the 1st Century, and many people today. He's going to point out that the most intense persecution comes from religious people because when you blow the pretense off, it makes them really angry. But Jesus basically comes, and what He says in His words, He basically is making a claim upon the heart of everyone who hears Him. Essentially His claim is, "I am the Lord and there is no other, and you will bow before Me, and worship Me, and surrender to Me." That is His claim. "You will not live your own way if you want to be My follower."

And think about how He does this in John's Gospel. He says, "The words I came and spoke to them have blown the lid off." Think of how Jesus' words show His absolute claim upon our lives. The 'I AM' sayings that John highlights in his Gospel. Remember Jesus says 'ego eimi' in the Greek. 'Ego eimi', 'I AM'. It really means 'I Myself am', and it harkens back to the Old Testament name for God when Moses asks the Lord, "What shall I tell them Your name is?" And He said, "You tell them I am that I am. Tell them I am sent you to them." And so Jesus then picks that up and says over and over in John's Gospel, 'ego eimi', 'I AM'. And in doing that, He is claiming to be God. And then in claiming to be God, He claims an absolute allegiance of the human heart. He is not like other religious teachers. He makes an absolute claim for absolute loyalty. John Stott writes about this in his book, Basic Christianity. He talks about the radical egocentricity of Jesus' preaching. Now doesn't that kind of unsettled you just even hearing that, doesn't it? I remember when I was first reading it, I thought, "Whoa, what are you talking about?" But he is pointing this out, he said:

No prophet who ever came before Jesus, the true prophets, ever said, "Look at me." They said, "There is one coming."

Even the false teachers in the world, whether it is Mohammad, or Buddha, or Confucius, they never had the kind of audacity that Jesus had. Jesus came onto the scene and said, "I am and there is no other. I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." He said, "Unless you hate your

father, and your mother, your wife, your sister, your brother, you are not worthy of Me.” He claimed an absolute right to your complete loyalty. Stott says:

That kind of focus allows you only two options. You either reject Him and say He is not who He says He is, or you understand He is claiming full deity in every word. He is claiming to be God, and He is claiming to have rights over all that He has made. The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. It is He who made us and not we ourselves. We belong to Him. We are the sheep of His pasture. We owe Him everything that we are.

And so He comes and He says, “I am. I am the bread of life. You’re hungry. I’m what you’re hungry for. I am the Light of the world. You’re in darkness. You need light. I am the Light. You’re wandering. You need protection. I am the good shepherd. I am the way, the truth, and the life. You’re dead. I am the resurrection and the life.” He also makes claims throughout the Gospel, to who He really is, that the Jews when they saw this, they understood what He was doing.

I had a conversation with a Jehovah’s Witness a couple of years ago over several months. He kept coming back to the house. I’ve had it before where I’ve talked, and I never tell him right up front, “I want you to know I’m a pastor.” I just listen for a little while and then I start talking. But this guy, he says, “Hey, you seem to know your Bible really well,” so I said, “Yeah, I’m a Baptist pastor.” I didn’t come right out and tell him that, but it came out. I wasn’t going to hide it, and he kept coming back to the house, because he really felt like, he was looking for a big trophy, I guess. He kept coming back, and I had him even come into the house one time. Most of the time we sat and talked on the stoop, but I thought, “Come inside. I want us to look at the Gospel of John together.” So we looked at the Gospel of John together, and then I showed him all the “I am” sayings, and when He says in John 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I am,” and he was unmoved.

He took me to a verse in Matthew that says that the true prophets understand, basically. He was basically saying he’s a true prophet and we’re not, and that he understands what we don’t understand. So that was our last conversation for a while, but he said to me, “The more I read the Gospel of John, the more I believe Jesus isn’t fully God.” I was like, “That’s amazing.” The Gospel of John does teach His functional subordination, the He obeys the Father and does whatever the Father tells Him to do, but the Gospel of John clearly teaches that functional subordination does not equal subordination of being. He is equal to God in power, and glory, and majesty, and it’s clear. He claims that equality again and again.

Let me show you these passages. Look at John 5:17. This was after Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda. He healed him on the Sabbath, and He told him, "Pick up your pallet and walk." The Jews got really mad at Him for healing, and for also telling this guy to carry his pallet on the Sabbath. Verse 16 says:

John 5:16 ~ For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

And look what He said:

John 5:17 ~ But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

Do you know what He said? He said, "Listen, God works on the Sabbath. My Father is working and I am working. That's because God works on the Sabbath." They understood this. Look at Verse 18:

John 5:18 ~ For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

The Jews understood what Jehovah's Witnesses don't. Look at John 8. I just mentioned it a moment ago, where He says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Look at Verse 56:

John 8:56 ~ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

He didn't say, "I was." He said, "I am." Look at Verse 59:

John 8:59 ~ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

In John 10:30, Jesus says:

John 10:30 ~ I and the Father are one."

Look what the Jews do.

John 10:31 ~ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

He talks to them a little more, and then down in Verse 37, He says:

John 10:37 ~ If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.”

Look at Verse 39:

John 10:39 ~ Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

He’s telling them, “Listen, I’m God.” What do they do? They want to kill God. He’s basically saying, “I’m God, and I’m not what you want Me to be,” and this is where the rub comes. People would worship God if He would be what they wanted Him to be. That’s what idolatry is. *If I can determine how He will be, and He will be according to my rules and my preferences, and do what I want Him to do, then I’m happy to talk about God.* This is why there’s so much religion in the world, but they’re manufacturing a god, when the true God comes onto the scene and He says, “It’s not about what you want. You thought that I was altogether like you (Psalm 50:20), but I am not. I am that I am.”

So Jesus makes that claim, and that claim carries with it such moral and spiritual force. It means you must bow, and that’s what people hate. The words of Jesus, He says in Verse 22 of John 15 that the words of Jesus uncovered the sin and calls the light to get brighter so that people reacted more violently. But then secondly, the other thing that causes the light to get brighter, the second sub-point of this first point, *When the Light Gets Brighter*, when ought you to be prepared for increased hostility? 1) *When the Light Gets Brighter*: A) *The Words of Jesus Make the Light Brighter*, and B) *The Works of Jesus Make the Light Brighter*.

B) The Works of Jesus Make the Light Brighter:

Verse 24:

John 15:24 ~ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

Look at all the works that Jesus did. All the powerful works demonstrated clearly who He is. John has been careful to chronicle seven signs in the first part of His Gospel. These signs point to the reality, the spiritual reality, of who Jesus is. Remember He turned water into wine in John 2. He's showing He's Lord over nature. He healed the nobleman's son from a distance. He's Lord over space. He healed the man that was lame for 38 years. He's Lord over physics and also time. He fed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish. He said earlier He was the bread of life. That was a miracle to illustrate what He was going to teach on. He feeds all those people. "Listen, I am the bread of life." He walked on water, healed a man born blind, and He raised a man from the dead. Why did the Jews hate Him? Look at John 11 where He raises Lazarus from the dead, a man who had been dead four days. When we looked at this passage, we saw that the process of decay had clearly started. It happens very quickly. So his blood vessels were broken down. Everything, the internal systems were already decayed, broken up. But what Jesus does when He speaks is He puts it all back together. Verse 43:

John 11:43 ~ When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." 45 Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.

That's what they should have done, right? He has to be who He says He is.

John 11:46 ~ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

Now look what happens when the light gets brighter:

John 11:47 ~ Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48 If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

They go on to say, “We need to kill Him,” because they’re more interested in their place than they are in worshipping God. You see, God doesn’t want them to continue to have things the way they want it. When He comes, He comes to take charge. He doesn’t take orders.

So these miracles themselves make a claim that either you bow, you believe, you humble yourself, you worship Christ, or you will hate Him more. So what this says is that when the light gets brighter in someone’s life, when you’re sharing with them and you have an opportunity to share with them, you’ll find at times as you share, sometimes they’ll just shut you out, and will continue to say they like you because they love being around you, and they’ll still want to be your friend, but they don’t want to keep listening to you talk about Jesus. And if you press that, you will see the antipathy that they have, and it’s not towards you personally. It’s toward God.

So when ought we to be prepared for increased hostility? As the light gets brighter. We’re commanded to be lights of the world. You are the light of the world. God didn’t make you a light of the world to hide it under a peck measure, or to light a lamp and put it under your bed. No, you put it on a lamp stand. We’re supposed to be the light of the world. We’re supposed to proclaim the glory of Jesus Christ. We can be tempted to just go along to get along, can’t we? So, persecution is more of a reality and more of a danger when the light gets brighter, but secondly, when the darkness gets deeper. That’s the second main point this morning. When ought you to be prepared for increased hostility? Not only when the light gets brighter, but when the darkness gets deeper.

2) When the Darkness Gets Deeper:

This is one of the reasons I feel like in America that this is more and more a possibility, because we live in days where spiritual darkness is deepening. And when spiritual darkness deepens, you have the likelihood of persecution, and it’s a greater likelihood. You see this in John 16:2-4, with the way Jesus uses the word *hour*.

John 16:2 ~ ...an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

That is astonishing. That is, when the Jews killed the eleven, and the Jews killed the early Christian witnesses, the martyrs, they really believed they were offering service to God. So great was their darkness. In Verse 4, He says:

John 16:4 ~ But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes,...

That's a key word in John, the *hour*. He uses that word 24 times, and a number of times it's used to refer to Jesus' hour. In John 2:4 when Mary comes to Jesus and says they have no wine, and He says, "Woman, what do you want Me to do? My hour is not yet come." In John 7:30, He's teaching, and they want to seize Him and kill Him, but the text says they did not touch Him because His *hour* had not yet come. In John 8:20, the same thing. They wanted to seize Him, to grab Him, but His hour had not yet come. In John 12:23, remember when the Greeks come to Jesus and they say, "We'd like to see Jesus," and Andrew and Philip come to Him to tell Him. When they tell Him, "There are some Greeks here to see You," what does He say? "Now is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified." Now is the hour. In Verse 27 He says, "My heart is troubled. What should I do? Shall I turn away from this hour? Shall I ask You, Father, to deliver Me from this hour? No, it's for this hour that I came." In John 13:1, he says:

John 13:1 ~ ...Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world...

John 13:3 ~ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. 5 Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet...

This hour, the hour, is something that is used in the New Testament to speak of the hour when darkness is at its greatest. If you turn back over to Luke 22:53, Jesus says something that resonates with John 16:4. Remember in John 16:4 that we were looking at a moment ago, He says, "I've said these things to you so that you may remember when their hour comes." Their hour, what's that? It's the hour of your enemies, the hour of the world. Look at what he says in John 22:53. This is when they are arresting Jesus. The chief priests and the officers send out men with swords and clubs, and in Verse 52 He says:

John 22:52 ~ "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?"

"You needed to bring swords and clubs out here to arrest Me like you would a robber?"

John 22:53 ~ While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.

Literally in the Greek it says, “But this is your hour, and this is the power of darkness.” He’s saying, “The reason you’re laying hands on Me is this is the hour, that God has determined to give Me over to the power of darkness.” This is the hour and the power of darkness. The word *power* there is an interesting word. It’s a word which means *the authority and power*. It’s to have permission. So when He’s talking about *hour*, in Luke 22 Jesus says that, He’s saying, “This is the hour. Now you are permitted to do this. The reason you didn’t before, is you were not permitted to do this, but now this is the hour of darkness.” That’s what He’s hinting at. And then when He says in John 16:4, “...when their hour comes...” He’s talking about there will be times where God grants permission, authority, and power to the forces of darkness, and in those moments, they will do things like they did to the apostles. They will kill you and think they’re offering service to God. But you’ve got to understand that it’s all in the hand of God.

I love what Jesus says in John 18 to Pontius Pilate. You can see that in His humanity, He needed to remind Himself of the truth, and He also wanted Pilate to know it. Remember when Pilate’s trying to basically get Him to speak up and defend Himself? This is essentially what Pilate is saying. “Listen, I don’t know why they’re wanting to kill You. They say You’re the King of the Jews. Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus says, “It is as you say. Do you say this on behalf of what you believe, or what someone told you?” He says, “I don’t care about You being the King of the Jews,” and they keep talking, and Pilate is like, “Why don’t You answer me more?” because Jesus does not answer some of his questions. “Don’t you realize that I have power over You, whether You live or die?” Jesus looks at him and says, “You have no power over Me but such as has been given to you by My Father in Heaven.”

So you know as a follower of Jesus Christ that if you ever are in that experience, and the people that have experienced it in this last century or these last few days, the people who truly love God can know that if that happens, you can know that the person who is looking at you with murderous intent, if he has the power to kill you—I think they want to kill us all the time. Not everybody, I don’t want to get carried away, but there are some people who hate the Gospel so much, they hate the fact that you believe that Jesus is the only way to Heaven, and there are some people that if they could, they would, but God’s not letting them. They can’t touch you until He wills it for His glory and your good.

That's what Jesus was saying. "You have no power over Me but such as has been given to you by My Father in Heaven." But when that hour comes, when you do see the Lord giving more authority to darkness, you can understand that those circumstances are more right, that that tends to be the time where He allows persecution to happen like this. And He's telling us this ahead of time so we can be prepared mentally for action. Think about it. Where are people being killed right now? The Muslim nations are leading the way right now. Communist nations have also been murderous. A lot of Christians died in the hands of Nazism. But in Muslim nations, darkness is reigning. It has great power. Roman Catholic nations, the hundreds that died during the Reformation, martyred by Catholics, or the hundreds even in England that died under Bloody Mary. There are times when in a global sense or a macro sense, darkness reigns, and at those times, you see more intense persecution.

You also see it in places where immorality and godlessness reigns. This is the case like when Paul went to Ephesus. You remember when he's preaching in Ephesus and it starts off where a young girl is converted, and she was one who worked for the idol makers, and they were upset because she was a good worker. "See, this is going to mess up our business. You're bringing people out of idolatry." They got really angry, and anyway, they stir up a crowd. The crowd takes Paul into basically a stadium, and then some people come in to kind of rescue him. The Roman governors there are trying to restore order, and they come in to try to calm the crowd, and there starts this debate. You remember at some point along the way, it's filled up. People just flooded in to see what was going on. It says they started yelling, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is the goddess of the Ephesians!" and they yelled it for hours, the people, at the top of their lungs. "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians."

The wickedness that can spring up when you touch the right spot in someone's heart, it happens in a micro way. And you can see this in recent American history. Why is it some people get so intensely upset when you tell them you don't believe it's proper to abort a child in the womb? What has happened when you do that? I mean seriously, why would they care what you think so much? If it was just Democrats and Republicans, or whatever like that, "Well, you're just the wrong party. You don't know what you're talking about." Or if it was just, "That's your opinion. Everybody's got an opinion. Who cares what you think?" Why do they get so angry? Haven't you had that experience? "I'm not so angry with this person I'm talking to. I'm not angry with you. I'm concerned about you. I want you to see the truth. I'm not angry with you," but they're angry with me. Why? I think it's helpful sometimes to ask them that. You've got to wait for the right moment. "Do

you realize how upset you got over this, and this is my opinion? You think that I believe something that's outdated and doesn't matter. Why does it bother you so much?" Sometimes a person who's maybe looking on, not the person that's so intensely angry, but a person looking on might sit there and say, "You know, that is a good question." Why is it that they react? It's because they're hearing in your words the voice of Jesus and the voice of God, "You are not Lord over your body. You are not Lord over the child that is in your womb. You are not. God is," and they hate that.

It's the same thing with homosexuality. You say, "Listen, God's way is right. It's best. I know that you may have intense struggles, and you have these desires and feelings that you don't understand. I'm sorry that's the case, but God has a way out of that. God will help you. God will bless you. God will give you all the strength that you need to walk in a way that's pleasing to Him. You need Jesus. We're all sinners. If we all did what we wanted to do, what a mess the world would be. But there's a way. There's a better way." But what you're saying to that person is, "God is Lord over your sexual identity, and you are not. He made them male and He made them female. He did. You didn't choose it." And the intense opposition comes because what's happening is you're putting your finger, and sometimes it's unwittingly, it just comes out of nowhere, doesn't it? You just hit with it, because you have touched that nerve center that basically is rooted in, "I will be my own god. I will be the master of my fate and the captain of my soul."

Sometimes, the more truth that you have, it doesn't mean anything. The darkness gets deeper. Jesus said in Verse 24, "They have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. They have seen us." It isn't just evidence that convicts. We were talking about this in Sunday School Apologetics. You can put all the evidence in the world before the unbelieving mind, and he will close his eyes and stop up his ears, and say, "Stop talking about that. I will not believe." This is happening in the area of creation and evolution. You just read carefully the stuff that's happening in the areas of science. Evolution is becoming more and more obviously ridiculous. I wish I could talk about this for a long time, but let me just say quickly that the second law of thermodynamics is that everything goes from order to chaos, that everything winds down. We see it in the heavenly spaces. We see it in ecosystems. We see it in the aging process, that you have order and it breaks down. Evolution posits that the law of thermodynamics goes completely against that. It says that everything moves from chaos to order, that out of the chaos of the primordial slime, life was formed, one cell, and then out of that one cell, more and more complex and ordered life forms came. It is absurd and ridiculous.

They believe it why? It's because it's a moral issue. For a long time the sciences have been doing a really good job of PR. There's no question about that. A lot of people believe it because they think that's what they've been taught. It's obvious. Everybody believes that. But there's more and more good science happening to prove the Bible, six day creation, the global flood. Google Mount St. Helens in the Answers in Genesis magazine and read that article. It's phenomenal what it teaches you about how Mount St. Helens proved the global flood. The Grand Canyon came from the global flood, not from millions and millions of years of some little river running through it. But it's not going to matter for many of them. The truth won't necessarily bring them, but it will bring some. So we're called to lift up the Gospel and to preach the Gospel, because the only hope of that lost person is to receive the light. That's their only hope. The most loving thing that you can do to the unbeliever is to lift up the light of Jesus Christ, because they are in the dark. They're at war with God, and if they don't find out they're at war with God, they're going to die, and realize they were at war with God their whole life, and they're going to be in hell, and it'll be too late. But if you lift up the light, then they'll see, and sometimes the Lord uses that to say, "What is wrong with me? What's going on inside of me?" And as you're lifting up Christ they see not only are they at war with God, but the good news is God is a God who saves those who are at war with them. God is the God of peace.

Another reason that we need to lift Him up regardless, is because God ought to be glorified. That's the most important thing. The most important thing you or I can do every day is lift up the glory of Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter how people feel about it. We need to lift Him up. Now, we need to be wise, and not just walking around just yelling out all the time and nonsense like that, but we need to look for opportunities to lift up Christ as we're able to work it into conversations in appropriate ways just to talk about Jesus. The most wonderful Person in the world, the glory of God, the Savior of the world, He is worthy. God left the glory of Heaven, came to this world, and suffered His own wrath against sin so that you and I could be free. That's the best news the world has ever heard. He rose again from the dead and He lives forever, and He saves those who trust in Him. The Lord has called us to live in a war zone throughout our lives, and we are to be people who are prepared for the battle. May God help us be faithful.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Father, we thank You that You are sovereign over all things, and so that You're sovereign over the hour and the moment. You're sovereign over whether the darkness gets deeper around us or not, and You planned out our lives before there

was a single day. You planned out every moment. Every good work that You have for us, You ordained it before we were even born. We're thankful that You don't give us the grace that we need until we need it. Lord, we don't feel like we could stand firm for You in intense persecution. There are often times where I'm anxious about that. We thank You, Lord, that Your grace is sufficient for us, because Your strength is made perfect in weakness. So we will cling to You and trust in You, and You will make a stand. He will stand because his God will make him stand. May we be faithful to lift up Christ, and may You continue in these dark days to show more and more unbelievers the glory of Your Son, and bring them to Yourself. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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