



TIME OF GRACE®

Jesus' Love, My Life: Expect Pushback

Study Notes

Summary

Jesus never promised a warm and fuzzy Christian life. Rather, he was honest about hatred, persecution, and even death. Yet Christian persecution is proof of our connection to Christ. So don't go astray! Let the Holy Spirit remind you of Jesus, whose eternal blessings are worth a lifetime of suffering.

- **John 15:18–16:4:** ¹⁸ If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: “A servant is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: “They hated me without reason.” ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. **16** ¹ All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. ² They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. ³ They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. ⁴ I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you.
- The What: Many will _____ you.
- The Why: Because you agree with _____.
- **John 7:7:** The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil.
- Spectrum of Suffering:
0 - Deserved Hatred

- 1 - Insults
- 2 - Threats
- 3 - Violence
- 4 - Death

- The What Now: _____, give _____, and see _____.

Points to Ponder

1. To what level have you suffered specifically because you agree with Jesus? Looking back, did you handle that suffering in a Christ-like way? What would you do differently if God gave you a second change to suffer?
2. Look closely at John 15:26,27. List three reasons why the Holy Spirit is a necessary help when you are facing spiritual pushback.
3. Compare today's message with John 3:16-21. What connections do you see? What additional points does Jesus make in John chapter 3 to help you prepare for persecution?

Homework for Next Week

Read John 17:20-26.

Time of Grace Ministry
Jesus' Love, My Life: Expect Pushback
John 15:18-16:4
March 22, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

If you're going to be close to Jesus, you should expect it to be really, really hard. If you become a follower of Jesus, a Christian, you should never expect that life is going to get easier. In fact, life with Jesus might cost you everything.

Today, I want to take you back to that Thursday night before Friday's cross, the night before Jesus bled, and read to you just a big chunk of Scripture; what Jesus taught his disciples about what to expect in this world. So if you want to follow along with me in your Bible or on the screen, listen to the words of Jesus from John 15 and John 16. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. But as it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' 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. "All this I've told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you thinks they're offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when their time comes, you will remember that I warned you about them."

Those are the words that Jesus wanted his original disciples and all of the disciples throughout the centuries to know. And today, I want to break down Jesus' teaching into three things. First of all, I want to teach you what exactly Jesus said. Second, I want to touch on why he said it. And finally, I want to encourage you what you should do about it. So the what, the why, and the what not? That's what we're going to cover today.

So if you're taking notes in your program, let's start with the what. What was Jesus teaching the Christian church in these verses? They're pretty straight forward, right? He said that many will hate you. And hate is a strong word but that's the word that Jesus chose. In fact, if my count is right, he said hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, hate - seven times he used the word hate in just eight verses. Then he added a persecute, and another persecute, and this is the way they will treat you. And in one like paragraph of the Bible, you have 10 examples of pushback that Jesus his people, his disciples, should expect. And what's curious to me is that when Jesus talked

about that kind of hatred and persecution and pushback, he actually predicted that it would happen out there with the world - he brings up the world, I think, five or six times - and he said it would happen inside the church. He said people who are very religious, who actually think they're offering a service to God, they're going to kick you out of the church, boot you out of the synagogue. In fact, they're going to persecute you to the point of death and they somehow think that's going to be a delight to God. Jesus said if you follow me faithfully, you should expect many people to hate you out there in the world and even here in the church.

Now if your experience has been anything like mine, that teaching might kind of surprise you. Depending where you were born and what kind of family you grew up in, where you went to high school or college, what your friends believe about Jesus, if you've kind of been in this bubble of Bible-believing, church-attending, Jesus-worshipping people, that maybe isn't your experience, which is why it's really important to know that for many people, it has been. If you look at the 2,000 year history of the Christian church since Jesus spoke these words, and even globally what's happening to the Christian church in our day and generation, and I would suggest what's happening increasingly locally in our own culture and nation, what Jesus said is very true. That if you're going to be close to Jesus, you should expect it to be really, really hard. That if you become a follower of Jesus, a Christian, you should never expect that life is going to get easier. In fact, life with Jesus might cost you everything.

And to prove it to you, I brought the basket of suffering. Inside this basket are my Jesus action figures. Do you know the guys who were in the upper room and originally heard this sermon - what happened to them? Let me tell you; I've got the rest of those guys in this basket. And it doesn't matter who I pick - this is Andrew. Do you know what happened to Andrew? They murdered him. Do you know what happened to Thomas? They murdered him. Do you know what happened to John? They tried to murder him, they boiled him in oil, but he survived long enough to write the words we're hearing today. Peter? Murdered him. Matthew? Murdered him. James? That's in the Bible, Acts 12, they chopped off his head and murdered him and they murdered all the rest, too.

So the original Christians did not expect everyone in the world or in the church to love them. They listened to Jesus when he said a servant is not greater than his master. And if they didn't like my teaching, they might not like yours. In fact, if they hated it so much, they persecuted and put me on a cross, they might not love you either. The Romans put the nails into the cross and the religious people called for his crucifixion and Jesus wanted every one of his followers to know that if they put our Savior on a cross, they might not make you a cake. They might hate you and they might make it really hard.

Which kind of begs the question, well, why? I mean, why would people hate Jesus and his closest followers that much? And that's especially an interesting question if you would read the verse that I skipped. You know, I jumped in today into Jesus' teaching in John 15:18, where he said, "The world's going to hate you." Do you know what Jesus said in John 15:17? He said, "Love each other." He said to his disciples, I want you to love each other. I want you to love one another and I want you to love your enemies. If people hate you and strike you, I want you to turn the other cheek. I want you to go the extra mile. I want you to forgive. I want you to bless those who curse you. I want you to love everyone. Which is curious, huh? He says, love

like that and - oh yeah, if they hate you, which makes you say what? Why would someone hate someone who's famous for love? I mean, if I'm being a jerk and I'm arrogant and disrespectful and combative and causing drama in my neighborhood or on the soccer field, like no doubt people are going to hate me back. But if I was the kindest most Christ-like, Jesus person, why would anyone persecute or hate or want to kill me?

And the answer to that question is actually easy: Because we can say, "Well, why did they want to kill Jesus?" I mean, Jesus was the perfect example of love; he never slandered or hated or was violent. He was compassionate and kind, he forgave his enemies, he healed the sick, he raised the dead, he loved people like no one else loved so why did they murder Jesus? And there's an interesting answer to that question. In fact, if you're taking notes, here's the why: Why would people hate you? And here's my answer: Because you agree with Jesus. And what did Jesus say and teach? How did he live that would make people hate him and his followers? And John's gospel gives us the answer to that question. Look back at Jesus' words. Jesus spoke these to his own brothers who didn't believe in him. He said, "The world cannot hate you but it hates me because I testified that its works are evil." Why did people get so mad that they wanted to murder Jesus? Because he said, "Hey, that's evil. Stop it." And even though he was so humble and he was so gracious and he was so forgiving and he was the definition of love, when he said that, even the church people snapped and cried for his death. And Jesus is predicting that if you do the same thing, if you agree with Jesus that there is a good and there is an evil and Jesus gets to decide the line between the two, that some beliefs are good with God and some are not, and some behaviors are acceptable to God and others aren't. If you simply embrace Jesus' definition and with all the kindness and compassion and offers to help and love, if you say there's a right or wrong and someone's on the other side of the line, they will hate you.

And I came up with a little spectrum that I want to share with you today. I call it the spectrum of suffering; five things that might happen to you as a faithful follower of Jesus. And here's what I came up with. First of all, there's level zero suffering, which I'm going to call deserved hatred. It's really important in Jesus' words, he said that what he is talking about is when someone hates you without reason. And so if you give them a reason, that's not even on the scale, okay? So if someone's criticizing Christians because I'm super like judgmental and proud and arrogant, when they say you're so holier than though and I'm kind of acting holier than though, that's not what Jesus is talking about, okay? If I kind of skipped the John 15:17 love, I can't claim that I'm a victim of John 15:18 hatred and persecution, alright? And so, we as Christians have to be really, really, really careful. Sometimes when you don't agree with someone's beliefs or behavior, we get impatient or unkind; sometimes we judge the world and try to get them to change their behavior when they don't even believe in Jesus just yet. So we have to be really, really careful that we don't act like victims that are so persecuted in our culture because the truth is, that kind of attitude doesn't make anyone want to worship Jesus.

And if you're an American Christian right now, I really need you to see this because if it gets harder for us in the next 10 or 20 or 50 years, whining will not change anyone's mind. Complaining about Supreme Court decisions or the new laws of our government or what's happening in our culture, it will not change anyone. Do you know what happened to these guys though when they suffered? In Acts 2, in Acts 4, in Acts 5, when they were flogged, like nearly beaten to death for Jesus by the government and the church, do you know what they did? They

rejoiced! They left beaten and bruised and bleeding and they celebrated because they were worthy of suffering for the name of Jesus. And people didn't know what to do with it. They didn't whine, they didn't complain. They said, "Jesus, we went through this because we belong to you. Thank you so much that we belong to you." And so if you suffer, Christians, make sure it's not undeserved hatred and you know how to handle it. Because maybe you're going to go through a little bit of what the apostles did, such as level one hatred, which is simple insult. You know, when someone comes at you verbally. When they say because you agree with Jesus that you're bigoted or you're judgmental or you're the problem or you're emotionally scarring the next generation with your standards of behavior, when there are like those blanket statements from the media or the latest celebrity who's recently tweeted, when you're in a college classroom and the professor implies that everyone who would ever believe that, like the things that Jesus taught, is backwards and naïve; when simply agreeing with Jesus becomes a hate crime, that's level one suffering.

I've seen this actually quite a bit on social media and movies where Christians, like devout, Jesus-following Christians, are rarely the heroes, right, unless there was a Christian director? Instead, we're almost always the hypocrites. And especially, if in the movie there's a pastor, he's always the worst, right? He's the guy who comes down hard as people are living together, exploring their sexuality, but behind the scenes, what's the pastor like? He's always taking money, sleeping with the secretary, messed up sexually, right? It's just like level one blanket; like you couldn't actually be a humble, kind, Christian who has a high level of integrity. There's just this kind of cultural insult that you're part of the problem.

And sometimes, that grows though to level two, which are threats. When people in your neighborhood or the professor or the government or whoever says, if you keep saying that, if you keep standing for that, if you keep believing that and promoting that, like we're coming after you. We're coming after your school, your scholarship, your grade, your place on our team. You can't have a job here if you believe that. You're not going to get a break according to the government laws if you stand for that. Like, we might come after you or your reputation; like it's going to get bad for you unless you let go of Jesus.

And then sometimes, they follow through and that's level three; when the threat turns to violence. When you get sued or worse; when hatred raises its fists and people come after people of faith. When you're assaulted or kidnapped or jailed or imprisoned or beaten or tortured, which sometimes rises up to level four - when they bomb your church, when they burn down your place of worship, when they behead you and put the feed on the internet so everyone can see what happens to people who stand with Jesus. According to Jesus himself, that's how bad it can get. And my question for you is how bad has it gotten? As you think about the spectrum, like what have you gone through for your faith in Jesus? And honestly, when I look at that, I feel pretty spoiled. Obviously, level four, I haven't gone through. Level three, I haven't gone through. Level two, I've barely gone through. Level one, on occasion. Most people aren't too rude or too mean to me because I'm a Christian or I'm a pastor. I get a few comments here and there as I'm playing soccer but not much. In fact, do you know what I worry about most of the time when I come to church here to worship every Sunday? I worry how many of you are going to come; that's my fear. That it's going to be a basketball game or a football game or the weather's going to be bad or you're going to be busy or the weather's going to be nice and you're going to stay

outside instead of coming to church. Like that's my normal Sunday fear; "God, I hope a lot of people come." Or my other Sunday fear is that, you know, right when I'm in the middle of talking about Jesus and it's really important and I'm about to make my emotional point, that stupid train outside of our church is going to come rolling through. You know this happens? And none of you are going to hear about Jesus; you're going to be distracted. Like that's my fear, which means I'm pretty spoiled. And I know some of you have suffered pretty badly, even within the church, but maybe a lot of your stories are like mine; that God's been really kind and really merciful and we haven't had to suffer that much just yet.

But I want you to know that people do. In fact, there's this great group called Open Doors USA that kind of tracks through their data and personal interviews what kind of suffering is happening on our planet right now to Christians. And I want to show you a map of the kind of data they found where high persecution, or very high persecution, or extreme persecution, like level two, three and four stuff, is happening and it's happening all over. Barely at all in my neck of the woods here in the western hemisphere in America but it's happening all over. In fact, I recently read this story of a young woman named Leah who lived in Nigeria and was kidnapped along with 100 of her classmates because they refused to convert to another religion. That was a year ago and Leah's mom still doesn't know where she is or if she's even alive. If you're taking notes, here are three answers I have to close things out today. I think, first, you should pray. I think, second, you should give thanks. And finally, I think you should see Jesus.

I hope after today's message, you pray; that you pray for the persecuted church. I mean, if nothing else, pray for Leah. If she's alive right now, she's in a terrifying situation. She's probably being assaulted, she's probably being threatened that if she doesn't give up on Jesus, it will get very, very bad for her. She's somewhere right now and she's thinking something and maybe we can pray that she would think about Jesus; that he's worth suffering for. That even if the rest of her life on this earth feels like hell, it lasts about this long compared to the heaven that awaits her as a believer in Jesus Christ. Pray that she would not be a coward and pray that she would not be quiet. Pray that she would remind the women around her that Jesus Christ is life and in him we have everything we need to see God face to face without judgment or fear. Pray that she remembers all those Bible passages because she probably hasn't seen a Bible in a long time. Pray that the Holy Spirit brings into her heart the treasure that she has found in Jesus that she would do anything, she would suffer, she would die before she would let him go.

Pray for the pastors in countries right now who are sitting in prison and who will not be released unless they give up Jesus. Pray that they would be faithful, not just for the sake of their own souls, but for the churches that are following their lead. Who need to see someone like the apostles who would give up everything, who would die on a cross, and they would worship because they've become worthy of suffering for his name. Maybe like I did this past week, you could download the app from Open Doors USA, which will tell you every single week Christians around the world who are suffering and how you can help and how you can pray. If God has given us a season of peace, would we pray for those who aren't going through it? I'm asking you today to pray for the persecuted church.

Number two, I hope that you give thanks. I hope that every day, and especially every Sunday when no one hates you, you would be incredibly grateful. I hope that when you walk out of

church and you look to the left and you see that verse from John 15 and it seems off, that you'd be grateful. I pray that your biggest frustration as you get back into your car is that the pastor talked for about five or 10 or 17 minutes too long or something was wrong with the Wi-Fi or they ran out of coffee or the music wasn't as good as last Sunday. I hope if that's your biggest frustration about church, you take a step back and you become insanely grateful. Most Christians throughout history have not been born in a place like I was born or lived in an era that we have lived. God has given us the exception and not the rule and so for every day that there's peace, every day we don't have to be afraid to post something about Jesus on social media, every day that we can gather above ground instead of under it because God has given us peace, let's give him thanks and let's be grateful.

And finally, let's see Jesus. There's this great picture from one of my favorite Christian artists; a man named Christopher Powers. And when he tried to depict persecution, this is what he drew. And I love that picture because he didn't lie that sometimes you get wounded for being close to Jesus. Sometimes that arrow of persecution brushes your face and you're bleeding and you're hurting but he reminds me of how much Jesus has spared us from. That if the devil had his way, he would have rained down arrows and made your life miserable for following Jesus but in his grace, Jesus spared us. And so even though it might be hard and even though we might be on the spectrum of suffering, we are so grateful that Jesus has shielded us. And even more, what I love about his picture is what's happening to the sufferer; that he has not taken his eyes off the Savior.

That's actually what Jesus promised to help with back in John 15; look at his words. He says, "When the Advocate comes, whom I have sent to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me." Now the Advocate was Jesus' nickname for the Holy Spirit and he said I'm going to send the Holy Spirit, who's going to testify, who's going to remind you, who's going to advocate for my greatness and my glory so that when you suffer, you'll testify, too. Instead of conforming and instead of being quiet, you would stand up and proudly confess the name of Jesus Christ.

And I think of that picture one more time. When we fix our eyes on our Savior, when we realize that in his face we have found total forgiveness and a place in the family of God, that no matter what we go through, because of Jesus, there is a God who knows us and yet loves us. A God who accepts us and includes us. A God who knows all the stuff that we've messed up and all the behavior we wish we could undo and yet, he promises you still belong to me because the blood of Jesus Christ. You know, the world might look at Jesus and see a law giver who makes you change but we Christians look in the face of Jesus and we see a God of love who changed us. Who gave us a new heart that has found all the hope and peace that we need in his unending and crazy love.

And so now, I won't promise you that it will be easy but I can promise you it will be worth it. And that's what I hope you remember as you walk out of church today. I hope you glance to the left and you see those words before you head out to your car. And I hope you notice two things: If the world hates you, don't be surprised. But I hope you also notice what came before that phrase; where Jesus said, "Because you belong to me." If you're just another person, they would love you, but you're not. I chose you. You're a child of God. And what is all the world's hate

when compared with that amount of love? I mean, suddenly it seems like nothing because in Jesus our Savior, we have found everything.

Let's pray.

Dear God, we really need the Holy Spirit. I have a feeling most people are like me; we like it when people like us. And we love it when people applaud us and accept us and include us and say that we can be part of their circle. And so when we're not, God, we really need your promise to be real and true and clear. And so we pray today for the Holy Spirit. Would you send the Advocate, would you call him right alongside of us, that Jesus would seem so great and so glorious that if we could just belong to him and be with him, we'd suffer anything because we don't want to lose him.

Jesus, I pray for the persecuted church right now. There are people who are going through things I can't even comprehend. But Jesus, you know what it's like to suffer and you can give them the strength they need to endure until they see your face. You promise in the end of the Bible that if we are faithful, even to the point of death, you will give us the crown of life and so we pray for their faithfulness. And I pray, God, too for our character. God, you know I'm not a prophet but I just have a hunch things are not going to get easier for your people in the next 10 years in America. And I pray that we would never, ever give up love just because our world ceases to embrace the truth. Help us to remember how to treat people who hate us; how to show compassion and serve those who persecute us. God, help us to turn the other cheek and to love our enemies just like you, Jesus; that the world would see something confusing and we could confess your name and tell them what a treasure we have found at the cross.

I thank you, God, for hearing this prayer. I ask this week that we would suffer well, that we would love even better. I thank you, Jesus, for calling us your own and saying that because of your blood we belong to God. It's in your name that we pray all these things confidently, Amen.