

Love and Hate in a Broken World

Thomas Robinson, April 11, 2010

John 15:16 – 16:4a

¹⁶ **You did not choose me**, but **I chose you** and **appointed you** so that you might go and **bear fruit**, and that **your fruit may last**, so that whatever you **ask in my name** the Father will give you.

¹⁷ I am commanding your these things, that you **love each other**.

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: "**Servants are not greater than their Lord**." [13:16] 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 Those who hate me **hate 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.*" [Ps 69:4]

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 hour is coming when **those who kill 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 hour comes** you will remember that I warned you about them.

John 1: 10-12

¹⁰ **He was in the world**, and though the **world was made through him**, the **world did not recognize him**. ¹¹ He came to that which was **his own**, but **his own did not receive him**. ¹² Yet to all who **did receive him**, to those who **believed in his name**, he gave the right to become **children of God**.

John 3: 16-17

¹⁶ For **God so loved the world** that he **gave his one and only Son**, that whoever believes in him shall **not perish but have eternal life**. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to **save the world through him**.

1 Corinthians 1: 21-25

²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the **foolishness of what is preached to save those who believe**. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but **we preach Christ crucified**: a **stumbling block** to Jews and **foolishness** to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God** and the **wisdom of God**. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

God's Love meets the World's Rejection

Jesus is talking to his disciples at dinner, 18 hours before his crucifixion. Disturbing surprises about betrayal, denial. Yet so much was beautiful: Love command, Spirit of Truth, God dwelling in them, Peace, Vine and branches, Friendship. Jesus takes responsibility: He chose them, appointed them, fruitful life with God.

But Jesus is preparing them for the crisis of his death and all that follows. He begins to speak about hatred, persecution, not just for himself but for them. Warning.

The events of the next hours are profound, complex, mysterious: The cross is the embodiment of the world's sin, injustice, violence, cowardice, betrayal, power, fear. Rejection of God's rule, replaced by human idols of power, religion, wealth.

The cross is even more the embodiment of God's love and sacrifice for the world.

God loves the world and gives himself in the Son for the world. Life's creator giving his life, giving life. God's reality breaking in, revealing the world's idolatry. In Jesus, God serves, suffers, dies to break the grip of sin and defeat death, to reveal God's own reality and glory, God's self-giving love for the World.

The idols of power, money, sex, religion, and death cast themselves as ultimate reality, always pushing God out, replaced by our gods. The cross and resurrection is a once-for-all event, but it stamps a pattern for Jesus' disciples in the world. "I have been crucified with Christ..." (Gal 2:20). The cross is foolish, a stumbling block; it is also God's wisdom, power, God's glory seen in this distorted world.

Belonging to the World or to Jesus

Jesus warns the disciples that they will suffer within this profound conflict. It has nothing to do with them, but it reflects who they belong to, chosen by Jesus.

Notice that all the hatred Jesus speaks of flows only one direction, from the world and its idols toward Jesus and his followers. Jesus never gives permission for his followers to hate the world. He loves the world and is dying for it even in its sin.

It is almost a cliché of our times that religion/faith/belief in God is a prime source of hatred, intolerance, violence in our world. We can certainly see across history plenty of situations in which religion and Christendom have been enmeshed in violence. Often institutions identified as Christian have become profound enemies of the cross, centers of the idols of power and wealth - belonging to the world.

The cross is a continual call and challenge to Christians, individually and collectively.

We are to live in the world, for the world, but never to belong to the world.

To whom do you belong? Christians witness to a reality/truth beyond this world.

They can never be fully trusted by the world, because their ultimate allegiance is beyond. Business, political party, family, ethnic group, nation, cultural movement: Christians participate actively, but always with a discerning edge, never letting themselves be defined by the group. Love, generosity, forgiveness mark them.

Joining the Spirit to Testify about Jesus

We do not go alone into the challenging realm of being in the world but not of it.

God participates: The Advocate, Spirit of Truth, sent by Jesus from the Father.

God works in us, transforming, challenging, strengthening, reassuring, healing.

We must also be witnesses. Under threat of death. But also under ridicule or being demoted. We bear witness to the great love of God in a world that needs Him.