

“Hated and Sanctified”

It's the night when Jesus will be handed over by one of His own disciples – put on trial by His own countrymen – another disciple will swear to God that he doesn't know Jesus – and then He will be abandoned by the rest of the disciples as He is lead away to be crucified on Calvary.

And what does Jesus do in the midst of all this? He prays. He prays for His disciples. “Father ... I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

These words originally prayed in that upper room for His disciples – could be found on the lips of Jesus today, as He sits at the Father's right hand – praying for you, His disciples. Already He has “ascended into heaven” – but not before giving us His Word, and His servants to preach His Word. And what is the result for you who hear His Word and believe it? The world hates you.

The world hates you because it hates Jesus. The Christian who abides in God's Word abides in God – and so you are “hated by association.” The devil, the world, and our sinful nature, do not want a god to rule over them – they want to be god – and they resist anyone who would try to take that away from them.

When Christians keep silent, or excuse under the cover of “love” such things as gender self-identification, homosexuality, abortion, the love of money, forsaking the sabbath day by worshipping at the altar of sports, and so on – the world accepts them, encourages them, loves them.

But that is not being faithful to God, and abiding in His truth. When Christians hear and believe God's Word – when they speak God's truths to this world – they are despised, they are called all sorts of names, they are hated – even as Christ was.

You are “not of the world, just as I am not of the world,” Jesus says. And yet, you live smack dab in the middle of it. The world surrounds you, infiltrates your body and mind, and appeals to your sinful nature. It truly is a battle – you against the world.

Like everyone else, you don’t want to be hated, shunned or ridiculed – so the temptation is to simply go along with the world and its way of living. Like all the disciples of Jesus Christ who have come before us – we too are tossed to and fro by the pressures of the world in which we live.

Just think how the church has been impacted by the culture of the world. The Post-Modern mindset strips God’s Word of any and all authority – it says that truth is relative – it’s whatever you want it to be. And so no one can say something is right or wrong – good or bad. It’s all up to you. You are your own god.

Christian pastors are guilty of preaching their own truths, or what they think the people want to hear – rather than the words God has given them to preach. God is made impotent, or quarantined. The miracles of Jesus are denied – He was not born of a virgin, or raised to life again on the third day.

And most tragic is that Jesus is not preached as the Savior of sinners – because sin and sinners have been cancelled from sermons. After all – if truth is relative – and you can identify yourself as whatever you want to be – then there is no need for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth, take on human flesh, and shed His blood to atone for the sin of all people.

God’s arrangement and governance of all creation is despised, rejected, and replaced. The ordering of man and woman – husband and wife – parents and children - -- what God says is good, the world say “it’s evil.”

Point out the disruption of God’s ordering of creation – telling your neighbor, out of love for them, that how they have ordered their lives is “not good” – and you will be hated. Having sexual relations when you are not husband and wife – telling children that they must obey their parents – pointing out that God does not call women to be pastors – practicing Closed Communion out of love for the neighbor and the truth of God’s Word – and the claws will come out – and the world will attack.

Use a liturgy that faithfully distinguishes between God's Law and Gospel – which extols His presence, and His grace for sinners – and the world will go somewhere else – where they can create their way of doing worship – which usually ends up mimicking the world in which we live.

Jesus, the Son of Man – comes “not to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many” – but man, and his man-centered liturgies, are too busy doing something for Jesus, to even notice, or receive, His service.

Dearly beloved, regardless of what the world wants, or thinks, or does – Jesus does come to you today to serve you with His gifts. He comes to ransom you – and not just you but all people – from the tyranny and bondage of the world.

Your loving Savior does not give up on those who betray, deny, despise and desert Him – He continues to stand in the midst of the earth – desiring to draw all people to Himself – that they may have life in His name.

It is because we have hated and despised Jesus that we are here today – to receive His mercy. As it was on the night in which He was betrayed – so it is now – Jesus, the Son of God, comes to love, serve, and forgive sinners.

Jesus comes to keep you in His name – to guard you from the temptations of the world – to unite His Church as one – to unite you to Himself, the Father and the Holy Spirit. His Word overcomes your enemies – His Word “sets you apart” from false teachings, from sin, from death and damnation. His Word “sanctifies” you.

In Christ you are holy. In Christ, you are safe. In Christ, you are saved eternally. And in Christ, you are one with the Father and the Holy Spirit – now, and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.