

# Prepare to be Hated

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, on Monday, Susie and I went out for a walk out near Ballotter. If you were out that way on that day, you would know that it was pretty drizzly.

We got quite damp. But on the way back, the heavens opened. It felt like driving down rivers rather than roads. And as I peered out of the windscreen with sheets of water running down at the windscreen wipers slashing like this, Susie said quietly to me, it's June next week.

This is the Scottish summertime. Now, we've lived here nearly 10 years. So in a way, what did we expect? In fact, we had even looked at the forecast before we set out.

So we knew it would probably rain. In fact, we packed our waterproofs. And so we were prepared for the rain when it came. And even then, it was a shock to the system.

We were fully prepared. We had the right expectations. Yet it was still hard to deal with when it came. How much more then do we need to be prepared and warned for something much worse than rain to fall on us?

[ 1 : 22 ] We've spent a few weeks now together in the upper room with Jesus. In John's gospel, Jesus is preparing his first followers for life in the world without him.

He's shortly going to his death, after which he will be raised from the dead. But then he will return to the Father. And so his followers will be left living for Jesus in a world that does not love him.

Now, if you have a longish memory, you'll remember that we used that phrase a lot at the beginning of the year when we were studying Peter's first letter to the churches.

Those Christians, remember, were suffering for their faith in Jesus several decades later in a different part of the world. But now we're hearing Jesus say the night before he died to his very first followers that that would be normal.

Jesus' message in these verses could be summed up like this. If you're a Christian, prepare to be hated. Prepare to be hated.

[ 2 : 39 ] Hate is a strong word. And I hesitated before using it in the title of this sermon. But it is not my words.

Glance down at verse 18, the very first verse we read together. Jesus says, if the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. Jesus is straight in.

No introduction. You got a story about the weather. Not so with Jesus. Jesus is not pulling his punches, and we need to hear this. And if it sounds strong to us this morning, then we especially need to hear it.

Weather forecasts are famously unreliable, but only a fool would see those little rain clouds on the weather app and not pack a raincoat. How much more then, when the Lord Jesus tells us that we will be hated if we trust in him, are we fools if we do not prepare for that reality?

And the stakes are very high. Glance at verse 16, verse 1. See Jesus' purpose statement. All this I've told you so that you will not fall away.

- [ 3 : 54 ] Jesus doesn't want followers who say, when the dark clouds of persecution come, this isn't what I signed up for. He wants followers who, when he asks, are you going to go away as well, are ready to answer with, Peter, where else are we meant to go?
- You have the words of eternal life, and we have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. Jesus wants followers who listen to his words and count the cost, and follow him to the bitter and glorious end.
- So, let us let Jesus prepare us for that this morning, as we hear his words. We have two big points, which each have three little points.
- Firstly, then, first big question, why will we be hated? Because we belong to Jesus and not to the world. Read with me again from verse 18. The world hates you.
- Keep in mind, says Jesus, that it hated me first. 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.
- [ 5 : 14 ] That is why the world hates you. Why will you be hated for following Jesus? Because, says Jesus, you have changed sides.
- I saw a film recently called The Courier. Perhaps you have seen it. It tells the true story of an English businessman who was recruited by MI6 to work as a spy in the run-up to the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- His task was to go to Moscow and bring back top-secret files from a high-up Soviet official called Oleg Penkovsky. He was working as a double agent.
- He saw what his country was doing was wrong. He wanted to do what was right. So he changed sides. And spoiler alert, he gets caught.
- He's called a traitor. He's stripped of his medals. He's put in prison where he is tortured. And then history tells us he was executed and buried in an unmarked grave.
- [ 6 : 21 ] And while that might sound extreme, that is actually no different to what our brothers and sisters are suffering in other parts of the world, what they face when they turn from following the course of this world to following Jesus.
- Even in countries like Nigeria, where there are lots of Christians, our brothers and sisters are regularly threatened and killed by their neighbors.
- All the way through to countries like Afghanistan, where being a Christian now is a crime punishable by death. Why is that the case? Jesus says it is because he has given these people, these Christians, a new identity.
- They are no longer citizens of the world, but citizens of heaven. You do not belong to the world. I've chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you, he says.
- And as hard as that might be for us to believe on a sunny Sunday morning in Aberdeen, Jesus says that that is the norm for people who follow him.
- [ 7 : 34 ] If you trust in him today, you have changed sides. You have defected. You are in the world, but you no longer belong to the world. So then here's the question for us.
- Why don't we feel hated? Why don't we feel threatened? Well, because our world, our society, has been broadly speaking a Christian society for a long time.
- Belonging to Jesus hasn't felt like changing sides. In fact, for many of us, it probably felt like embracing our upbringing. But as our world, our society quickly changes, turning to Jesus is going to be a good thing.
- We're going to feel less like coming of age and more like betraying a powerful global empire. More and more, we will be seen as traitors who have betrayed our upbringing and have defected from the values of our world.

And so, friends, if you call yourself a Christian this morning, I cannot stand here and guarantee your safety. Do we understand that?

[ 8 : 50 ] Jesus is reminding us this morning, if we need it reminded, that there is no safe Christianity. We don't let our history lull you into a false sense of security.

If you belong to Jesus, don't expect to be loved. Prepare to be hated. Those are Jesus' words. And not something because of something that you say, maybe, or that you do differently, but because of who you are now.

A new identity. You've changed sides. And so, as you walk with Jesus, sometimes you won't be able to help being hated, no matter how kind or loving or gentle you are.

One of the biggest unseen threats to your faith and mine this morning, I think, is the desire to be liked. We really want people to like us, don't we?

Have you ever thought that that could be the difference between you sticking with Jesus and falling away? It's one of those respectable sins, isn't it, that we live with, but we need to deal with it.

[ 10 : 07 ] Does Jesus' love mean more to you than being liked by the people in your life? And if you're not a Christian here, this is something that Jesus wants you to think about too, to weigh up.

Count the cost, he says, of following me. He's not trying to sell you a special deal to new customers that turns into a worse deal a few months later.

No, he wants you to know from the start what it is that you are signing up for. Now, if you're wondering in the face of all this, why would I sign up for that? Why would I follow Jesus? Let us remember that he's not asking us to do anything that he himself has not already done for us.

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. He was brutally treated, flogged, slandered, nailed to a cross.

Well, remember what I told you, he says. A servant is not greater than his master. They persecuted me, they'll persecute you also. Look at what they will do to me, he says.

[ 11 : 20 ] Look at what I will do for you, he says. If we follow this man, we cannot expect not to be treated in the same way. Last time we were in John, we thought about our union with Christ, that we are branches in the vine that is Jesus, that he gives us his life, his whole life, his eternal and invincible resurrection life that bears fruit in our lives, but also his humiliating suffering and death.

Listen to Paul in Philippians chapter 3, talking about what it meant for him to belong to Jesus. I left my old life behind, he says, that I may know Christ and the power of his resurrection and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul wanted the whole Christ, suffering, death, as well as his resurrection. And that is exactly what he got when he turned and put his trust in Christ and was united with him, suffering and death and one day resurrection.

And brothers and sisters, we have not got a different Jesus from that. We have got the real Jesus. And that means real suffering, as well as real life.

Prepare to be hated, because you belong to Jesus and not to the world. And why does that provoke the world's hatred? Well, second mini point, because Jesus reveals the world's sin.

[ 13 : 10 ] This is a shorter point, I promise you, but it's important we understand why Jesus isn't loved by everyone. If you have a look from verse 22, it says, if I had not come and spoken to them, they wouldn't be guilty of sin.

But now they have no excuse for their sin. In verse 24, if I had not done among them the works, no one else did, they wouldn't be guilty of sin, as it is they have seen, and yet they've hated both me and my father.

So Jesus is saying, if he hadn't come and said what he said and done what he had done, well, people could easily say, we didn't know who we were dealing with. But since he has come, no one now can plead ignorance.

Because in fact, his words and his works reveal the heart of the world. The world saw him, they heard him, and they crucified him.

And so the heart of the world is one that refuses to recognize Jesus as Lord, refuses his call to repent and believe in him.

[ 14 : 17 ] You imagine a searchlight sweeping the ground. What does the world do? Well, it runs for cover. Jesus is pure light.

His words and his works, they shine light into the darkness of our world, into the darkness of our hearts. But there are things, aren't there, that our world does not want to be brought to light or questioned or seen by God.

When you see somebody running away from the scene of a crime, it's a pretty sure sign, isn't it, that they are guilty. Well, that is what the world did when Christ came, said John.

And that is exactly what the world does when Christians come in Christ's name. Not that we have any right, okay, to be judgmental or critical or mean to people, but simply that our lives will naturally show something of the light of Christ, the aroma of him that the world finds uncomfortable to live with.

Christ revealed sin, and so, he says, they've hated both me and my father. That is why his words and works are still hated today. That is why we will be hated also when we come in his name.

[ 15 : 41 ] And thirdly, because the world thinks it knows better. In chapter 16, Jesus there, in verse 2, is talking about persecution proper, isn't he?

Not pressure, but persecution. They'll put you out of the synagogue. In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they're offering a service to God.

Now, Jesus isn't overstating it here. He's not fear-mongering. This is just what happened. Remember, even John chapter 9, what happened to the man who was blind, who was born blind?

Jesus gave him his sight. What happened to him? He said, Jesus gave me my sight back, and he was put out of the synagogue. His parents, remember, didn't answer the question because they feared the same fate.

And that threat only got worse after Jesus died and rose again. Earlier we heard, didn't we, from Acts chapter 9, how Saul went from town to town rounding up Christians.

[ 16 : 50 ] He hated them. He wanted them gone. He persecuted religiously. And that's a bit of a strange thought for us. We tend to think that persecution comes from an atheistic world.

But around the world and throughout history, Christians have often been persecuted in the name of God, under the name of religion. Because in the face of Jesus' words and works, his life and death and resurrection, a world that doesn't love him thinks it knows better than him what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, what is true and false.

And sometimes, Jesus says, sometimes, that world is wearing a dog collar. Now, I hope you know, okay, by now, you've known me nine months, some of you a bit longer than that.

I hope you know that I don't say this lightly and I'm not trying to upset anyone. But we need to see that this is real. Okay, a couple of weeks ago, as you know, I was down at our General Assembly in Edinburgh.

Across the road was another General Assembly, the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, our National Church. And at that assembly, one of the things that happened was a vote on whether the National Church would support a new law, which, if it is passed, will make it illegal for us to teach what the Bible teaches about sexuality and gender.

[ 18 : 31 ] It would criminalize parents for having open and honest conversations with their children who are struggling with their sexuality and gender. It would criminalize preachers for preaching sensitively and lovingly the need to repent from our sexual sins.

and it would criminalize, in fact, any of us for counseling or praying with a friend, a brother, or sister to stick with the Bible's teaching when they are struggling with their sexuality and gender.

And the Church of Scotland voted to support that new law. And friends, when the news reached the room that I was sitting in, the air got thinner because there was a moment of realization that this could get very serious very soon.

The law could turn against us. And the National Church supports that, thinking that it is doing service to God.

Now, again, I'm not trying to upset you. And it is not fear-mongering. I'm simply telling you what has happened. And it is scary. So why am I telling you this now?

[ 19 : 52 ] Well, because Jesus told us this would happen. Jesus promised this would happen, that we would be hated by the world in God's name because the world thinks it knows better than him.

And why did he tell us that? Well, look at verse 1. All this I've told you so that you will not fall away. Friends, forewarned is forearmed.

The world thinks it knows better than Jesus, but Jesus knows better than all of us what will happen. And he wants us to be ready for when it comes. That is the reality.

So what must we do to prepare? Well, again, three ways Jesus gives us to get ready to be hated. Firstly, we must remember Jesus' words.

Have a look at verse 4. It's a simple and a short point, but it's so important. I've told you this, he says, so that when their time comes, you will remember that I warned you about them.

[ 20 : 58 ] He put yourself in John's shoes. He'd heard Jesus say these words when he was a young man. As an old man, he was sent into exile on an island called Patmos because he loved and trusted Jesus.

And as he spent his days stranded on that island, do you think it changed anything for him to know that Jesus had said that it would be that way? Well, in one sense, no, because he was still stuck on an island.

But in another sense, I think it would have changed everything for him. Because if Jesus hadn't warned us, it would be easy, wouldn't it, for John to feel that it had all gone terribly wrong and that sin and darkness had gained the upper hand and that Jesus Christ had lost and his gospel had failed.

But because Christ told us it would be that way, we know that that cannot be true. His words here remind us that we are still right bang in the center of his will when we are suffering for his name.

that it's still his plan. He's still on the throne seated over it all. Now, that won't change our suffering or free us from it, but it does change the way we see our suffering.

[ 22 : 19 ] It's not an out-of-control accident. God has not let go of the wheel. It is part of the plan. So, when we remember Jesus' warning, we remember he is still in control, still Lord of the universe even when his enemies seem to be winning.

So, remember Jesus' words and warning. The second way we prepare, says Jesus, is to rely on the Holy Spirit. He says, verse 7, So, Jesus has gone away.

He sent the Holy Spirit to us. And that is really good for us. Back in chapter 14, we thought about who the Spirit is to us and for us, what he does for us.

Here, Jesus is telling us what the Spirit will do for the world. He will prove the world to be in the wrong. Now, it's not a nice thing, is it, when somebody tries to prove you wrong.

It's something that we don't like. We shouldn't do that sort of thing. But the word there is convict or convince, which is more like coming alongside somebody to persuade them, to talk them around.

[ 23 : 55 ] Because the Spirit is not trying to put people down or stand over them, but rather to win them over. That is what the Spirit has come into the world to do, says Jesus.

He's the great evangelist. In fact, he's the only evangelist that gets results because he's the only evangelist who can change hearts and minds and lives.

He comes to convince the world about sin and righteousness and judgment. Because on all three counts, the world is terribly wrong. It's wrong about sin because it says that there is no such thing as sin.

But the Spirit has come to convince the world otherwise. Not in spite of the fact that they haven't believed in Jesus, but because they haven't believed in Jesus. You think about that for a minute.

Here is Jesus. His enemies have nailed him to the cross. They didn't believe who he was the first time. And so he says, I'll give them another chance to respond rightly.

[ 25 : 05 ] I'll send the Holy Spirit. And guess what? The Spirit comes. Peter preaches on the day of Pentecost to the people of Jerusalem who had nailed Jesus to the cross.

And what happens? 3,000 people saw what they had done was wrong. They were convicted of their sin. They repented, said sorry to Jesus and turned to follow him.

That's what the Spirit has come to do. And that is what he still does. In the same way, the Spirit convinces or convicts the world about righteousness.

The world, again, thinks it can decide what is right and wrong, good and bad, but the Spirit comes to give the world a right view of what is right because Jesus isn't here in person to do it.

And thirdly, about judgments. The world says there's no day of judgment coming, while the Spirit says there is and convinces people of that.

[ 26 : 05 ] Not this time, notice verse 11, because Jesus isn't here, but because the prince of this world now stands condemned. The devil, says Jesus, has already been tried and found guilty and sentenced to forever in hell.

And the Spirit says to the world, don't follow him there. There is a day of judgment coming, the judge is coming, so turn to him before it is too late.

And friends, if you're not yet trusting in Jesus, that is what you need to take away from you today, from here today rather. Jesus has sent his Spirit to persuade and to convince you to believe in him and turn to him and trust in him.

He's not come to stand over you and say, I told you so. He's come alongside you to say, believe and have eternal life. He has not given up on people who don't love him.

Instead, Jesus has given everything. so that the world might come to know the truth about him. Brothers and sisters, if we do not believe that that is what the Holy Spirit has come to do, then what hope do we have?

[ 27 : 25 ] If the Spirit can take a persecutor like Saul and turn him into the Apostle Paul, then we have very great hope when persecution comes, do we not?

God. If we don't believe that the Spirit can do that, we will quickly give up when things get hot. But if we believe that that is what the Spirit has come to do and that he can do it and does do it and will do it, then we will trust in him to do it.

So rely on him to do his work when you are being hated by the world. And finally, and still more briefly, prepare by resting fully on God's word.

Verse 13, when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own, but only what he hears and will tell you what's yet to come. He will glorify me because it's from me that he will receive what he has made known to you.

So the Spirit will guide them then into all the truth, says Jesus. He's speaking there about his ministry to the apostles. But his ministry to the apostles and then to us.

[ 28 : 39 ] Because the truth comes to us in the form of our New Testament. Doesn't the Spirit have more to teach us today, we might wonder? Well, what does Jesus say?

Verse 13, he will not speak on his own. Verse 14, it's from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. Verse 15, the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.

Does the Holy Spirit have more to say than Jesus has said? No, because he takes what belongs to Christ and gives it to us.

And Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So what John is saying, friends, is that the Bible is the word of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Spirit. And if we do not have full confidence that that is what this is, if we don't have confidence in what the Spirit has said to the churches, again, we will be on shaky, shaky ground when opposition comes.

[ 29 : 47 ] It will be easy to let go and give way in that day because our feet won't be planted on the unchanging ground of Scripture. It sounds so counterintuitive, doesn't it, but it's been proved time and time and time again that when we loosen our hold on the Bible, we stop reaching people out there in the world.

It's when we hold firmly to Scripture that people take notice. Often that notice, as Jesus has reminded us, comes in the form of hatred and persecution. But sometimes when people hear God speak, they are drawn to him and find themselves wanting to trust and believe in Jesus.

And so, friends, lose the Bible and we lose both. We lose the hatred and persecution, but we also lose the good news and we lose Jesus Christ.

So, friends, prepare to be hated so that you will not fall away and lose Christ and his gospel. as we close, I'm going to read some words from Paul that give us great hope and then we'll pray together.

Paul writes, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[ 31 : 19 ] For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. Let's pray together.

God, our Father, we confess that in the face of Jesus' words, we are humbled and brought to our knees and we confess that we are weak and that sometimes we are afraid to be made.

Father, we thank you that Jesus spoke so clearly about what to expect when we turn to him. We thank you that in him we find eternal and everlasting life, that he promises always to be with us to the end of the age.

We thank you that in him we find strength for each day, that we find a refuge from our sin. Father, we pray that by your Holy Spirit, you please help us to prepare to stick with him, Lord, when the world turns against us.

Lord, help us, we pray, to put to death our love of human praise. Help us, we pray, to seek your glory always and not our own. And Father, how we pray that you would in some way preserve, Lord, the measure of freedom that we now have to live for you.

[ 32 : 48 ] But Lord, when that freedom isn't here anymore, we pray that you would give us strength to persevere. We thank you so much for Jesus and pray that you would keep us in him, for we pray in his name.

Amen.