

The Challenges of Love

Love the Way Jesus Taught It

By Sacha Mendes

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Bible Text: John 15:18-16:15

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Faith Church

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

Website: <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

Good morning. It is a privilege to be here today and I consider this to be an honor. We've been loved here. You guys have invested in us lots of time and I appreciate that. I think it's pretty safe to say that Faith Church is a global blessing. Do you realize this? That you are a global blessing. As you hear of several countries that have been influenced by Faith, I praise God for you. It is a privilege and also a responsibility so I pray that you remain faithful to the word as you fulfill his call for you. Faith Church, I love you dearly.

Anna said "hi" and she sends you a huge smile. She's still smiling a lot even when she understands what people are saying so she is smiling. I just found a secret note in my Bible before the first service and she is praying for us right now as we go through God's word.

I also bring greetings from our church. Our pastor, Pastor Addison, has been coming to February Conference for several years now and every time he comes, he comes back with a crazy idea and I appreciate that. It keeps pushing us for growth. Thank you for that.

I'm not here with Anna, Pedro and Chito. Pedro is a little boy now and Chito knows the reason why God gave him two legs now and he's walking everywhere. But I did bring my mom and older brother. They both got some time off, frequent miles, that helps and so they came and we are together in this journey. Right after this weekend, we are going to a conference together.

We are going, as a church, through a series called "Loving the Way Jesus Taught It." It is based on John 13-17 which is known as the Upper Room Discourse and if you are a guest today, it is a preaching series where the church goes passage-after-passage through this particular passage of the gospel of John. It is a series also entitled "Loving Our Neighbors" and "Love the Way Jesus Taught It." The previous weeks, they've been going through these passages. You can listen to that online wherever you are in the world, even if you are in Brazil, you can listen to that. So, I encourage you, if you weren't here for the previous weeks, to listen to all of those messages as they go through John 13-17.

The passage today is John 15:18-16:15. It is a passage that helps us to understand the challenges of love. What are the challenges of love? This particular passage is going to

define the challenges of love; it is going to warn us against its dangers; and also it's going to encourage us to face them with hope. This passage is going to explain what the challenges of love are, it's going to warn us to face them and warns against its dangers and also it's going to help us to face them with hope. As we walk through this particular passage, I hope you see those dangers. I hope you are warned today and I hope you get out of here with hope. There is hope as we face the challenges of love. I know you've been going through this journey to learn how to love one another and you learned that it's hard. It is hard to love people. There are challenges and this passage shows us that they are, indeed, challenges but face them with hope. There is hope.

So, we're going to read the text. As we go, I'm going to try to explain the text as we go and we're going to apply the text as we go. We're going to read, explain and apply the text as we go as we understand together what are the challenges of love. And you might be shocked with this first point. You are going to be shocked with this first point but stay with me, this is the first, not the only one. The first one is: bad news, the world hates you. Bad news, the world hates you. This is bad news. The world hates you. And this concept of being hated by the world is not unique to this passage as we are going to see and it's not strange to the theology of the Apostle John. Listen to what John writes in his first epistle before we go to John 15:18. Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you. The world hates you. If you are surprised with this, the Bible helps you to adjust your expectations concerning your relationship with this world. It is true and it is a common theme in the Bible: the world hates Christians. Strong words but they are Jesus' words.

Verse 18 says, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." What does he mean by "hates"? Maybe it's figurative language where Jesus is trying to use some slang in Greek. It used to be when I was here in the States that young people would say, "That's bad." Right? When something is cool. "That's bad," and cool. And bad is actually good and cool has nothing to do with the temperature, right? That gets confusing for foreigners so please be patient. "That's bad." Why? "No, it's good." Why? "Because it's cool." Why? "It's hot." No, it's not. What!

So, Jesus is not trying to trick us here. He's not trying any colloquial Greek or slang, he's being pretty straight-forward. The world hates you because they hate Jesus. The world hates Jesus. This is the first reason why people would hate Christians. And Jesus is going to explain in John 15, six reasons why the world hates you. The world hates you. The first one is: because the world hates Jesus. "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." The world hates you because the world hates Jesus.

Now, let me tell what Pastor Rob Green taught me in seminary. A little putting in action here. "If" plus an indicative verb, what does it mean? There is an "if" here and there is this verb "hates" which is indicative. Whatever it is, it is indicative. "If, hates," what does that mean? It means, I'm pretty sure about it. Jesus is not stating a doubt, Jesus is stating a fact. "If the world hates you," means "the world hates you." So, don't get surprised if the world hates you. If you go through this journey of learning how to love your neighbor expecting them to be nice to you, you've been thinking wrongly. The world is going to

hate you because the world hates Jesus. That's what the Lord is saying to the disciples and that's how we can apply it to us today.

“What? But Jesus is so nice, so what do you mean that the world hates Jesus?” And the key to understanding this concept of love is also linked together with what the Apostle John taught us in the rest of the gospel in his epistles, he's pretty straight-forward, there is no neutral position. It's either light or darkness. It's either truth or lie, falsehood. It's either hate or love. So, the world hates Jesus because they don't love Jesus. The world doesn't love Jesus. John 3:19-20 says the following, just pay attention to that, I don't have that on the screen, I put that on my notes later. So, pay attention to this one, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” We are called to love one another in a world that hates Jesus and us. Why? Because Jesus is light and people love darkness and when light comes it rebukes darkness and they love darkness so they don't love Jesus because Jesus is light. We are light. We are the light of this world and as you go and love one another, you testify about the truth and people love darkness so what are they going to start to do with you? They're going to hate you. Brothers and sisters, this world hates you because they hate Jesus.

This is how a theologian explained this point: “The world is a society of rebels and, therefore, finds it hard to tolerate those who are in joyful allegiance to the King to whom all loyalty is due.” They find it's hard because we are not of this world. We are not of this world which is our second reason why the world hates us: because you are not of the world. John 15:19, “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.” The world hates you because you are called out of this world. People are going to look to you and say, “You're not from here, are you?” I hear that a lot. I know from experience what I'm talking about. As soon as I open my mouth, people will hear me and say, “Hm,” and they will ask where I'm from, “I'm pretty sure you're not from here.” In some way, in a deeper way, we are all spiritual foreigners and we are called out of this world and people hate spiritual foreigners. “You don't belong here. You're not from here.” I'm not. I am not from here and I'm going somewhere else. Let me share with you and then we will get there, alright? We're going to get there.

So, we're not from this world and people hate us because we are not from around here, we are not from this world. Third reason: because the follower gets the same destiny of his master. The world hates you because the follower, us, we are followers of Christ, get the same destiny of the Master, Jesus. Verse 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.” And Jesus is being repetitive here and if you remember, in John 13, you've been going through this passage, John 13, open with me John 13:15-16. It says the following, “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.” Jesus is using the same phrase here: a slave is not greater than his master. When he first used that, he was referring to,

the context was: follow my example. Follow my example. Just whatever I do, you do. Now Jesus is saying: whatever happens to me is going to happen to you.

So, the follower gets the same destiny of his master and sometimes we rebuke, we refuse, we accuse the prosperity gospel. I know there are some here in the States, there are lots in Brazil as well and we rebuke this. This is wrong but we function as prosperity gospel people. How? We love one another expecting to be loved by the world. This is not going to happen. This is not going to happen. Love one another because you've been rescued by Jesus Christ and you are called to serve him but do not expect ethereal earthly blessings out of it. So, the world is going to hate us. The phrase seems to indicate that Jesus sets a model of ministry that the disciples would emulate expecting the same fate. We are following a crucified Christ and before the crown there is a cross and we follow him.

Fourth reason why the world hates Christians: John 15:21, it's because the world does not know the Father. "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me." Please pay attention to these in the sentence: the name of Jesus and does not know the Father. If we are serious about leaving out the name of Christ which to be a true Christian, we will be persecuted. Loving as Jesus taught it, we will provoke persecution. We will provoke the hate of the world towards us. "Does not know the Father" is an expression that showed that they did not understand God's revelation. If they knew the Father, they would understand that Jesus was God's revelation to them so they did not know the Father, they didn't recognize that Jesus was his revelation. If they didn't understand that Jesus was his revelation, they hated Jesus because they didn't understand where he was coming from. And people hate the world, why? Because they don't know the Father. They cannot recognize our message of love. They can't. They cannot understand and what we are trying to do is coming from the Father so they don't know him, that's why they hate us. Because if they knew who was sending us to this world, they would not hate us. But they do not know the Father. The world hates Jesus in the same way the world does not recognize those who hold the name of Jesus, in their character and identity. They're not going to see Jesus in you because they do not know the Father, they don't know how to recognize it.

Fifth reason why the world hates you: because the world hates the Father. The world does not know the Father, they also hate the Father. And the fifth reason why the world hates us takes us to a different perspective in our understanding of the problem. The challenges of love are not merely moral or ethical, they are theological. There is a God issue here. They hate the Father. That's why they hate us. It's not because of what you do, it's because of who you are, because of who the Father is.

So, as we further notice, loving people is not merely a behavioral matter but a matter of leaving out our theology. It's who we are. It's always connected what I am to what I do. Why do I speak funny? Are you wondering? Let me show you my passport, that's why. It's because of who I am. It's because of who I am. So, why do you love people? Because we are loving beings. B-e-i-n-g not b-e-a-n-s. We're getting hungry here. We are those kind of people: we love one another.

Sixth reason and last one why the world hates you: because of the testimony of truth. John 15:24-25, "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. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated me without a cause.'" The world hates us because of the testimony of truth. That happened with Jesus and even this rejection and hate toward Jesus fulfills the plan. Jesus is pretty clear: "To fulfill that is written in their Law," which is a quotation of Psalm 69:4, "They hate me without a cause." The hate was a sign itself that Jesus was the truth. Jesus was the truth. The works and signs of Jesus testified of his identity. The works and signs were not the sign themselves but they pointed to Jesus who is the truth so the world also hates Jesus because of the testimony of truth. Expect the hate from the world as you testify of the truth because the truth is light and light rebukes darkness so expect hate.

Now, verses 26 and 27 help us to understand our identification with this plan because this is not only true for Jesus and the disciples, this is also true for us today 2014. Verses 26 and 27, "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, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." Verse 26 says that the Spirit will be sent by Jesus from the Father. He is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father who testifies about Jesus. And verse 27 includes the disciples in this plan. Verse 27, disciples who also testify because they were with Jesus from the beginning. The Holy Spirit joins the disciples in testifying about Jesus to this world. The Holy Spirit joins the disciples in the task to testify about Jesus in this world of hate. This is what the Holy Spirit is going to do with the disciples.

Now, what does it do with us today? Remember that John has listened to this. John listens to this from a firsthand account. Jesus is speaking to him, John. Later on, he's going to register this in the gospel of John; later on, he's going to write 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation. There is an historical progression in the life of the Apostle John and he's learning his theology with Jesus. He's learning his theology with Jesus. John 15:11, go with me to John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." So, Jesus is going through this Upper Room Discourse so that the joy of the disciples would be made full.

And here comes this hate discourse. What's up with this? What's up with this hate discourse in terms of the world is going to hate you? "How is this going to make sure that my joy is going to be made full? Jesus, I'm not understanding this." "Well, whatever is going to be said later on in the Upper Room Discourse, it is written for your joy to be made complete, John." And John learned his lesson because later on in 1 John 1:3-4, this is what he's going to say, that "we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete." Jesus announced and proclaimed these things to the disciples so that their joy may be made complete. They received the word and their joy was made complete. Now the apostles were proclaiming the truth so that the disciples would have their joy complete through the proclamation of the word. And now, brothers and sisters, 2,000

years later, the word is being proclaimed so that your joy may be complete. Sunday after Sunday, Pastor Viars, the other pastors, proclaim the truth so that your joy may be complete and you are included in this apostolic experience for God's glory.

Love one another. And we are called to this. We are called to love one another and we participate in the same dynamic that the apostles participated in. You see the importance of the minister of the word and I know this church treasures with all their hearts and please continue to do it because this is what keeps us alive and to make our joy complete. Christians, we're entrusted with this message of loving one another in the context of hate and it's being so all over the world since then to now. Therefore, we grow in love while we experience hate because of the testimony of truth. Loving people is not merely being nice. It includes being nice, doing nice things but it's also linked to testifying about the truth. The ultimate form of love is seen in Jesus who is the revelation of truth. Jesus did what he did because of his overall ministry of the truth. Jesus is the truth. We love one another because of Jesus. There is no other reason why we love one another.

So let me ask you some tough questions. If Jesus was pretty sure about the fact that the world is going to hate you, why in the world does the world love you? Have you thought about this? In other words: why is it so common for Christians today all over the world to be so distant from this experience described by Jesus about the hate of the world? Because we need to wonder about this. It's very important what I'm saying but it's also important what I'm not saying. I'm not saying, "Go, get out of here," in the most despicable view that you can. That's not the point. That's not, "Okay, let's apply this. Let's be pretty annoying to our neighbors." No, that's not the thing. You don't become holier as you become more despicable or more hateful, that's not the point. This is not the point. But what I believe to be the point is that this passage today is connected to the passage, the context, the previous context.

Listen to John 15:17, "This I command you, that you love one another." This I command you, that you love one another. I believe that this text is showing us today that when the world hates us, it's because we don't love the way Jesus taught it. We don't love the way Jesus taught it. John 15:18-27 describes the challenges of love in our theological context but if you're not experiencing that, it might be because you're leaving out the rest of the text, "love one another." The world does not hate us because we're still not showing who we truly are, people of love. We still struggle to love one another fueled by the testimony of truth and if you're not loving, you're not in a neutral position. You're actually hating one another. There is no neutral position. Indifference and apathy are not neutral positions, they are mild hate. When we are indifferent, when we are apathetic to this world, we're being mildly hateful people and we are called to love one another, not to be indifferent, apathetic with the saints.

So, let me encourage you to make some practical changes. This is what I heard when I was in Brazil: the Passion Play is coming. And through the Passion Play, I know, I'm pretty sure that the message is going to be proclaimed. Announced in a different way but the testimony of truth is going to be there. This is how we can love one another; this is the center of who we are, the center of our message. Invite people to go to the Passion

Play. This is a way to show love, to put them on the path of love, baby steps, so we can invite people to come. Maybe you do have a co-worker that is struggling in his marriage. I don't know if you've heard about this but there is a counseling center here. Encourage him or her to come. There are counselors who are trained to give answers from the Bible and to share Jesus with them, to share the truth, the light. Why don't you just organize yourself to be intentionally loving people instead of entertaining yourself? Because this is what we naturally do, we love to entertain ourselves. All over the world, this is a human heart problem and we need to fight this.

As you grow in love, expect the hate of the world which leads us to the second point of our text today: warning. Get ready. Get ready. John 16:1, watch out for apostasy. "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling." What is Jesus trying to teach us here? We have been in the States from 2007-2010. We got married in June, 2007 and we got here in July, 2007 so we had an extended honeymoon. We got here, everything was great. We had several marvelous, wonderful experiences. We had some experiences of the kind, "I miss this," or "I miss that back home," but we made it through.

But there is one particular experience that I don't miss at all and I'm going to share it with you. Four years later, the truth is coming out, right? Weather radio. Ah, I can see some struggling. I'm with you. Weather radio. Why? I remember our first tornado warning. I was in the living room studying and I heard the siren. "What's that? I'm ready, Lord." Is that what it is? It wasn't. It could be but it wasn't. So, I called Brad F., another seminary student who lived across the parking lot and I said, "What's going on?" "Oh, that's a tornado warning." "What?" "A tornado warning." "What do I do? I don't know what to do." He said, "Ah, you can come to our basement or stay in the bathroom." I'm going. "Anna, let's go." Then Anna was, "Is this shirt nice?" "It doesn't matter! Just get your stuff! We need to go! Get the passports." Passports are pretty important because the bureaucracy to get another one is just as bad as a tornado. So, as soon as we got our stuff, we crossed the parking lot and we were in the basement freaking out, "The tornado." Have you seen Twister? That's where I was, you know, with the cow. We were not used to that. We have lots of problem where I live in Brazil but tornadoes are not one of them.

So, we were very concerned with those things and we were amazed by the natural way to deal with this that our friends here had. I remember a dear couple, the Rodgers, they're right here, I saw them. I could talk to them, "Did you see the tornado?" And they said, "Ah, that's fine." What? "Didn't you hear?" "I saw it." And then she told story after story after story about when she saw the tornado and I was like, "I didn't know those things really happened." But this is the thing: I didn't like that weather radio but if I had it to do all over again, I would get one. I would get one because knowing the bad news also can function to our own benefit. When that sign or that news would go off, I would freak out but I would know what to do, to take action.

And Jesus is warning us here, "Get ready." Get ready because if you don't have the right expectations, this is what you're going to do: "Well, I'm trying to love people but they hate me so I'm going out of the boat. I'm not staying with this church anymore. I'm going

to find somewhere..." Adjust your expectations. Get ready, things are going to get really bad so watch out for apostasy so you don't get the wrong expectations.

Challenges can get really, really bad, verses 2-3, John 16:2-3, "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. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me." Do you remember Saul, the persecutor that became the prey? Because he was the one persecuting thinking he was serving God. People that hate us, they don't know otherwise. They don't know differently because they do not know the Father so be patient with them. Know that God is going to use the challenges of love to become an opportunity to love. This is what God does, right? And this is what he did on the cross. He used his death to conquer death and he's going to use hate to show love. He's going to use this opportunity in our lives to keep loving people.

And challenges confirm our hope, "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them." Jesus was right. Every time we face the hate of this world, we must remember his words. He was right. He was right. Expect hate.

Now, this is what a theologian said: "The work of the Holy Spirit in the church is done in the context of persecution. The Spirit is not a guide and a helper for those in a straight way perfectly able to manage on their own. He comes to assist people caught up in the thick of battle and tried beyond their strength. Jesus makes it quite plain that the way before his followers is a hard and a difficult way." There is help. John 16:4, there is help. The work of Christ guarantees help.

John 16:4-7, "These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." Jesus is going to the Father and this is not actually bad, the contrary. Jesus is actually saying that the reason why the disciples are sad are the very reasons why their hearts will be full of joy. Because Jesus left. What does it mean that Jesus left? Well, Jesus died on a cross, rose from the dead and he's exalted in the Father. Jesus left and when he left, he sent us the Holy Spirit. Why? So that our joy may be complete. So that our joy may be complete. Jesus is leaving for their good. If he does not go, the helper would not come. And if the helper would not come, we have no hope. But we do because he left and he's coming again. And he's coming again.

Why is the coming of the Holy Spirit so important? The coming of the Holy Spirit is so important because it is the Holy Spirit that convicts the world. This world that hates us, it's actually being convicted by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is going to do a work very similar to what Jesus did when he was here on earth with us. John 16:8-11, "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning

righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.” The Holy Spirit was going to convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. And what is the actual meaning of “convict”? What does that mean? “Convict” is showing someone his sin. Usually it's a summons to repentance. It's very similar to what Jesus did when he was performing works and signs. He was showing, exposing sin and that's what the Holy Spirit is doing. He's exposing sin, bringing people to the point of conviction so that they have their eyes opened so that they can repent.

This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit and this is the help that we have as we work our way to love people and they hate us. You can count on the help that convicts people of their sin. They keep hating you, you keep loving them. They hate you more, you love them more. And the Holy Spirit is going to convict them that they're wrong through the testimony of truth because loving them is connected to the proclamation of the truth. Conviction exposes sin so the Holy Spirit is going to use the message of the gospel to expose sin, to lead people to repentance and to transform hate into love. This is where, brothers and sisters, the challenges of love are transformed through the gospel to become opportunities to love.

If they're hating you, this is great. It's horrible and great. Why? Because it is an opportunity to show differences, to show love. To show love. In fact, the fruit of the Spirit is always in the context of opposition. How are you going to show patience? When it's required of you. When are you going to show love? When there is hate. When does the light come? When there is darkness. Because if there is no opposition, there is no difference, we're just like them. That's why sometimes they love us because we're not showing who we truly are.

The Holy Spirit reveals truth. The Holy Spirit reveals truth. John 16:12-15, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.” The passage focuses on the completion of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The disciples could not bear what Jesus had to say to them so when the Spirit comes, he will guide them in all truth. The Spirit came, the disciples had the fulfillment of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit, they see the truth and the Holy Spirit is pointing them to Jesus giving them the implications of our faith.

As you experience the hate of the world, expect to love them. Loving one another is truly happening when it is shaped by the testimony of our truth, the truth of Jesus Christ which by the Spirit convicts the world of sin. When there is hate, there is opportunity to love. This is why, brothers and sisters, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the very reason why the world hates you but it's also the very reason why you keep loving them. It is true in the gospel that the challenges of love become the opportunities of love. So, as you go

through this journey to learn and grow in the path of love and you get challenged, keep loving them because this is exactly what Jesus did for us.

Would you stand and join me in prayer, please.

Dear God, we are thankful for the gospel. We praise you because you loved us when we hated you. We are thankful because you kept showing love, you sent your Son to die in our place when we were serving ourselves. We are also thankful because we heard the word. One day we heard the word, we got convicted of our sins, we had our eyes opened and now we understand that Jesus loved us so that we would love the world. I ask that you would encourage us this week so we could show your love to our neighbor, to our co-worker and especially to one another here so that people would come here and see that there is a community of love and know that we are your disciples. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.