

Lent Day 30

Tuesday March 20, 2018

Reading: John 15:18-27

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.

Reflection

I often picture Jesus when I read the gospels having a PR person in his discipleship group. When I get to passages like this, I picture that PR person just dropping their head and sighing deeply. Not again Jesus. This is not the way to get or keep disciples. If you want people to sign up, you need to up sell the divine quality of life and down play the cost of discipleship. But, not Jesus. No, he is upfront and in this situation he is getting his disciples prepared because he’s leaving. They will give testimony about him in the power of the Spirit because they have been with him from the beginning, but it isn’t going to be pain free.

Of course, I put that fictional character there because I enjoy when people feel awkward and because these passages rub me the wrong way too. But beyond how the words make us feel we need to check our expectations. How many people are encouraged to take up the religion of Christianity because it will make their lives better? Happier? More prosperous? “They hated me, so they’ll hate you.” These are the words of promise. We human beings have a great capacity to distance ourselves from the bits we are uncomfortable with. We reshape the religion to suit our needs and tastes — maybe this is why we shy away from scripture reading too often, it would be too much of a reality check.

So, the final question is, what do we expect life will be like today for us Jesus followers? Have you come to this faith to find peace? Peace is given, but that doesn’t equal a pain free life. Do you go to church as a socially acceptable activity? It’s acceptable only if you keep it to yourself. Jesus lays out two expectations for us: we are to be his witnesses (faith in the public sphere) and we will be hated for it, which will workout into persecution. Anyway we phrase our announcement of the good news there will always be an implicit announcement of the bad news first. On top of that we are now outsiders on account of Jesus removing us from the world. We have become different and we know our society fears and hates what is different. Are you prepared to be a Jesus follower who may be hated? or are you looking to keep your nice quiet religion?

Prayer

Spirit, help us to be followers of our master, bearing witness to his life, death and resurrection. Help us to conform our expectations to what Jesus has told us. We don’t want to be contrary for its own sake, but we do want to authentically announce the good news so people will come out from the world and become Jesus’s own. Amen.