

Kingdoms in Conflict - Part 1

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Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

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Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. John chapter 15 beginning at verse 18 into chapter 16 verse 4. Jesus speaking. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, then the world would love you as its own.

[2 : 41] But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my father also.

If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my father.

But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled. They hated me without a cause. But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the father, the spirit of truth who proceeds from the father, he will bear witness about me.

[3 : 57] And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away.

They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And he will do these things because they have not known the father nor me.

But I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you. That is the word of our glorious Lord.

Please be seated. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I want to thank my dear brothers for giving me a respite and brother Chris Blackman and brother Charlie Davidson. Thank you, brothers, for standing and preaching the word of God so ably and so grateful that we are blessed in this church with many gifted preachers.

[5 : 04] And I feel rich. The well-respected missionary now gone to Jesus, Leslie Newbigin, spoke of something that he called unbearable tension.

He said that because we as Christians are outsiders in this life. Our faith often comes into conflict with the world around us.

Sometimes our choices are relatively straightforward, though trying, but still pretty straightforward. Such as we believe human beings are created in the image of God and that our life begins in utero in the womb, making things like abortion on demand, murder, and an act of sin against the image of God.

That's pretty straightforward. Since we are fully pro-life, then life outside of the womb is also sacred. And so the sin of partiality, as James calls it in his book, in the form of preferential treatment of the rich over the poor or of ethnic or of one ethnic group, racism, over against another, is also a sin against God's image in all people.

[6 : 38] Praise the Lord that Jesus came to save sinners. Because even those who commit those sins are not beyond the grace of God.

But there are many others. We face some difficult choices today as well. Some very terrible and difficult choices.

The answers sometimes are clear and sometimes they're clear but not easy. And sometimes they're not as clear as we would like.

Should we attend our child's same-sex marriage to maintain relationships with our children? That's not easy.

I have my opinion on that one. And that my opinion is no. But that's still not easy. And may God give us grace, however you choose. But you want to honor Jesus more than anything else.

[7 : 38] These all exist. All these issues exist. And more. They're political issues, sexual issues, economic, scientific, ethical issues.

We as believers will be on one side and the world will be on the other. And so we as believers many times find ourselves to be outsiders to the prevailing wisdom of the world.

And let's be honest, no one likes to live in that kind of tension. No one wants to live as an outsider. I mean, we want to fit in.

And so what we do is we try to, we are tempted to resolve these tensions between ourselves and the world. Because we want to fit in.

We want to fit in. But we know things. But we know things. You know, there's some things you can't unsee and unknow.

[8 : 42] If you are a follower of Jesus, you know some things. That others don't want to believe, but you can't unknow it or unsee it.

Forgive me, but we're kind of like the teenagers in the hit TV show, Stranger Things.

Okay. Don't laugh. I know some of you have watched it. I saw it every season, by the way. It's a really funny show.

It's based in the 1980s. The best music ever. Okay. Rock and R&B;, hip hop, everything was great. These kids, right?

You know, middle schoolers save the world. I mean, cut me a break. I mean, yes, this is great.

These kids, they know there are creatures in another world that they call the upside down.

[9 : 46] They know these creatures want to destroy our reality. But the problem is these kids are the nerds. They're the geeks. They play role playing games like Dungeons and Dragons back in the day.

They tend to be very smart and techy, but they're considered weird. And the other groups pick on them. The jocks and the pretty people pick on them.

They bully them mercilessly, even viciously at times, because they don't fit. But here's the thing about these kids.

They're committed to saving the world. Even though they don't fit, they're committed to saving the very people who don't like them and treat them so badly. These kids are fighting a life and death war, but the people in their town of Hawkins think they're just weird, liars, and maybe even dangerous.

And there are few people who do know the truth. They're the military. But they want to use these creatures and use their powers for their own military purposes. And so they hunt the kids too.

[10 : 58] They want the power of the upside down creatures. You see, you've got two worlds in conflict. One hates the other and wants to conquer it. Back to the real world.

We talk about the upside down kingdom, don't we? The kingdom of God is the upside down. In other words, we see things so differently sometimes from the world that it looks like we're upside down.

We don't fit. These worlds collide, light and dark. What's our posture to be? How are we to engage a world sometimes that looks at us as weird, liars, bigoted, and at times look at us as even dangerous?

How are we to respond to the conflict? When these two kingdoms meet, what should we expect?

What should we expect? And how are we to respond in a way that honors our king?

The king of the upside down. The king of the kingdom of heaven. How are we to respond to honor him? This passage really speaks to these things, I think.

[12 : 22] But let's look at the context. Now, if you're using a pew Bible, and I hope you have a Bible with you, but if you're using a pew Bible, page 902. I want you to turn there. Make sure you have that in front of you. Because the context is fascinating.

Okay? First, the most immediate context to our passage, it says that people, this is verses 9 through 17 now.

We've been stuck. We studied that a while ago. That people who abide in Christ, who live lives dependent upon Jesus, and that last section, who are full of the self-sacrificial love of Christ, will be hated.

People who love like Jesus loves are not welcome in the world.

The greatest virtue in the kingdom of God, which is love, does not always warrant respect. Not because of love per se, but because of its reflection of Jesus.

[13:32] And since God is love, and Jesus is the son of God, it becomes a rejection of God himself. The creator of the universe is being rejected. Jesus is the embodiment of the love of God in human form.

That's striking. Because we are so encouraged. And if we are full of the spirit of God, if we've met the love of Jesus, his love is pouring out of us.

And yet that very thing will be conflicted with the culture around us. That blows my mind. But there's another connection too, which I want to make sure you have your Bibles in front of you.

It goes back to chapter 14. Jesus spent good time preparing his disciples. Remember, he's preparing his disciples for his leaving. He wants to be clear with them. He wants to give them some last words, some marching orders.

Make sure they understand what's about to happen. And he's not going to be here. And he wants his disciples, including us, to know how to live, how to respond, how to do life without his physical presence.

[14:47] He ends his lessons in the upper room, it seems. And in chapter 14, he ends his lessons there. And so, chapter 15, we know that he's on his way to the garden of Gethsemane.

But look how chapter 14 ends. It ends with some very striking words. Verse 30, I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming.

He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here. And that's chapter 15, they're walking, it seems, towards the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus will be arrested.

Chapter 14 ends with the Lord's prediction of Satan's coming. Meaning his impending arrest, trial and execution. And his determination to go all the way for the Father.

He's going to the cross, so that the world might know that he loves the Father. Not just that he loves us. That's true. But Jesus' concern is that the world knows that he loves the Father, even to the point of laying down his life.

[16:01] He wants that to be very clear. This becomes a natural connection to where we are in chapter 15.

While he speaks of the world's hatred, it's the work of the Prince of Darkness. This hatred that he's describing in our passage I just read.

It's the work of the Prince of Darkness, who has no claim on Jesus, and so he hates Jesus. He has no hold on Jesus. He can't control Jesus. He has no end with Jesus.

To the first part of chapter 15 tells us how we are to continue Christ's work, how to continue his work while he's no longer with us.

And now he says how his disciples will be treated. And how we will function and cope with that treatment while he's gone physically.

[17:05] You could say the rest of the book of John shows us how we who follow Jesus in his kingdom do not fully fit in the world. We don't fit.

So the big point for today, I think that's all I'm going to get to. Hatred comes from the world.

Hatred. Not. We love you. So glad you're here. Jesus says hatred. From verses 18 to 25, the word hate is repeated eight times in the ESV.

He keeps saying hate. And now we can't ignore that. He when whenever God repeats himself brothers and sisters, we better stop and pay attention.

So in those seven or eight verses or so, he keeps repeating the word hate. Hatred. You know what hatred is. A dislike. An intense dislike.

[18:08] Passionate dislike. To feel an extreme aversion for or extreme hostility towards something or someone is to detest.

We toss the word hate around too easily. I hate vanilla ice cream. Really? I hate broccoli. Don't tell my wife I said that. Oh, she's here. Thought you would.

Never mind. We very easily say we hate someone. I've heard people say I hate the president. I don't care who the president is by the way.

I've heard it every year. Every president I've heard people say I hate the president. I don't care who the, I've heard it. Really? I hate you that's a powerful word because anything we hate we can dis we can dis anything we hate we can disregard we don't have to we don't have to look at it we don't have to give it time of day or them time of day and if we're not careful anything we hate we can hurt so hatred is a very strong word and I'll caution you the use of it Jesus says hatred is coming from the world towards his disciples if I mean wow people full of love verse 18 if the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you and then he goes on now listen because we because we're human beings no one wants to be hated

I mean let me just see your hand which one of you wants to be hated and before you raise your hand we have psychiatric professionals here to help you who wants to be hated nobody wants to be hated and when and when you find that someone dislikes you or hates you if possible you want to do something about it you know you want to relieve the tension right you don't want to walk live in that you want them to like you and love you if possible but certainly like you a little bit and there's several ways that we can go about trying to resolve the tension between the world and Christ's disciples there's several ways we can do it I'm thinking about the book The Joyful Outsiders which I do come in to use a nifty little book the first thing we can do and easiest is to assimilate right if we change our views become conformist outsiders because we're still Christians but we conform if we do that we'll relieve the tension if we come if you know just assimilate change your views go along the get along that's one way to relieve the tension or we can try this we can withdraw from the world live separate but equal lives do everything Christian

[21 : 37] Christian grocery stores Christian bowling Christian everything right look at some of these mega churches they create an entire community where you don't have to leave the church grounds Christian everything Christian theme park Christian Disney I mean whatever you know that's an oxymoron anyway we call that the cloistered outsider close the vine close the windows don't let the world in as if sin is not in our hearts anyway that's it and in your children by the way but that's not a story there's another thing and by the way the cloistered people the cloistered one more thing they longed for the good old days when Christianity was the favorite faith they long they long they talk about the good old days

I wish the good old days you know when when when everything was closed on Sunday and and and we could talk about we prayed in schools and we had Bible reading in schools now this is Chattanooga we still have some of that actually praise the Lord I think so we can be cloistered but then there's another way we can we can go on the offensive another way to deal with the tension is to kick booty go on the offensive attack the world's choices attack the world's sins mobilize whatever non-violent weapons at our disposal we can become the combative outsider can I tell you something the Jews in Jesus day tried all of them let me give you some names the Herodians all of these are spoken of except one group is spoken of in the New Testament in the Gospels the Herodians they were the assimilationists they started working with King Herod if you can't beat them join them okay they were the assimilationists another group was called the Essenes they're not mentioned in the New Testament but they were there the Essenes they were the withdrawal type they were living in a compound okay withdrawing from the world we get the Qumran scrolls from these guys no if you don't know what that is don't worry about it then we have what we call my boys these are my boys the Zealots yeah they fought guerrilla warfare baby they were the men there was a group of the Zealots called the Saqqari it means the dagger men they carried daggers in their cloaks I'm not making this up y'all and their job was to kill kill those who were traitors and go after officials so they were the by any means necessary group all right then there were our favorites the Pharisees the Pharisees they tried to resolve the tension by longing for the good old days when when but they did it in a self-righteous way they wanted to bring back the good old days when God was honored the law was kept and a Davidic king ruled they thought if we get the people to keep the law

God will bless us now all of these were ways that the Jewish people sought to deal with the tension because they were living in two worlds they were the people of God living in the Roman world and the Roman world hated them and they wanted to get rid of the Romans and by any means they couldn't they wanted to get rid of them but someone but they tried to relieve the tension and with these various groups tried these ways to relieve the tension here's the thing here's the thing or as

my Jamaican family would say here's the ting Jesus didn't join any of them he didn't join the Essenes he didn't join the Pharisees he didn't join the Zealots he didn't join any of them but then what does that mean Jesus lived in the tension he didn't try to ease it or make it go away he lived in the tension he lived as an outsider in other words he walked in the kingdom of light because he was the light while living within the kingdom of darkness let me say it again he walked in the kingdom of light as the light while living within the kingdom of darkness he lived in both worlds at all times and we are his disciples as I said as I said before the word hate is used eight times in the ESV here in his phrases but here's another thing the word world is used five times hate and world hate and the world hate and the world so we need to be clear then about what the Lord means by the world he's not talking about the earth the word the word is cosmos we get our word cosmos you know it can mean it can speak of a complete orderly harmonious system

Jesus is speaking when he talks about the world he is speaking of a system and this system among fallen people it's among fallen humanity this system is in direct opposition to Christ and his kingdom it is a disordered and sometimes ordered invisible system in which people live that leaves God out leaves God out of their will out of his out of their will their thinking and their concerns and is ruled by Satan and sin it becomes visible in what people love what people value how people make decisions what we say we believe how we behave and is really revealed in the worship of false gods Jared Packer in his book

[28 : 43] God's Word says it this way the world denotes sinful humanity sinful mankind in the mass in the mass solidly given to unrighteousness and moral disorder and ungodliness and solidly hostile to the truth of God and the people of God he used the word solidly twice firmly hostile Paul will call it the kingdom of darkness and you see that in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 through 3 he's talking to the Ephesian Christians and he's telling them hey I want you guys to know the power of God in your lives that's how he ends chapter 1 I want you to know the power of God he's praying for them that they'll know the power of God in their lives and then he shows them how they know the power of God that's what chapter 2 is about that's how it begins it's showing how the power of God impacts those of us who are living in darkness and so he says this and you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world system following the prince of the power of the air that's the devil the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience among whom among this mass of humanity we all notice that all we all once lived in the passions that word is lusts of the flesh carrying out the desires of the body if it feels good do it and the mind whatever I can think of and imagine that my mind is a cesspool

I just want everything and we're by nature by nature by very nature by birth by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind and he says you were there and that's where the power of God met you because the thing he says next is this but God that's the next thing he says but God being rich in mercy because of his great love for which he loved you made you alive again in Christ Jesus by grace you have been saved hallelujah so the point being is that you look at the world but understand you're worldly that's where he that's where he that's where you lived that's where you were born that's what you breathed your habits and attitudes came out of the world hostile to God but the gospel came the good news the king of kings came the glory of God and the grace of God was revealed from heaven and we were made alive the power of God raised you from the dead hallelujah man that's good stuff right there man

I wish I had wrote it man Satan's called the God of this world he's called the one who blinds in 2 Corinthians 4 4 he blinds the minds of unbelievers keeping them from seeing the glory of Christ no one wants to be hated but that's where that's where we are hated here's the problem that's not really the problem because I don't think so here's the problem many Christians spend their lives trying to get the world to love them that's the problem we spend now listen now be careful don't don't run away with this my job as a Christian is to make the world hate me woo

I'm gonna be nasty I'm gonna be obnoxious I'm gonna call to everybody you're going to hell you're gonna burn I mean it's not our job to make the world hate us I want you to notice something about that entire passage here you go this is free no charge for this Jesus says the world hates us he never says we hate the world I'm talking about people now about people so we gotta be careful because we fall for that too we fall for that too I've seen it you ain't gonna say amen I've seen it we Christians hate the people in the world and Jesus never said that we're not we're not the people of hate we're the people of love not that love has teeth but we're people of love it's not love love love love love no it's love it's holy love

God's love but the world hates us and it's not your job to make the world love you if you do this if you try to do this I'm just clearing some ground today so I'm just if you seek to get the world to love you you want everybody to be your friend you wanna fit into every group every group teenagers we think about teenagers we think about how they wanna fit in with the cool kids and everything but I'm not talking about them we know that I'm talking about you big people we try to fit into groups and movements and political groups we fit in and we shouldn't fit because we shouldn't fit we shouldn't fit because it's of the world that's Babylon people I don't care I don't care how much the world says is with you it's still Babylon

[34 : 52] I gotta get through to somebody out there are you listening on the whoever you are I don't care what political I don't care if the world says listen we are with you we are with you in this movement we're gonna help the poor we're with you we're gonna we're gonna deal down with abortion we're gonna down with this but it's still the world with you do you understand and you can't trust the world I'm not saying you should just diss them I'm saying don't go native remember I told that before even though we may be aligned we're not in agreement the world will walk with you and be aligned with you yeah power to the people yeah do the right thing yeah yeah yeah but there's no real agreement because you're seeking to glorify

Jesus and the world is seeking to glorify itself and so even though you're walking together at some point listen if you really stick out if you abide in Christ and you don't try to compromise at some point the world's gonna say hold it hold it I thought we thought you would hold it because the world is always Babylon it's it's it's like the Taylor what is it what is it the I don't remember the exact image so you gotta help me out but the tortoise and the scorpion scorpion says hey take me across the lake scorpion says you're gonna sting me the scorpion says no I'm not gonna sting you man it's all good you're doing me a solid I'm with you man we both wanna go across I'm going with you so he said okay come on halfway over the scorpion stings the turtle got him under underbellied you're under the shell you know and the turtle as he's dying says why did you sting me he said I'm still a scorpion what do you expect the world's still a scorpion you may be riding together for a minute but understand the system isn't your system it's not your system anymore you're not part of the system and eventually be careful it's gonna I'm trying to help somebody I don't know who you are we don't wanna be hated but we don't wanna but we can't compromise clear biblical teaching on sex sexuality marriage ethics we can't compromise clear biblical teaching in order to fit in family it may we're trying to make our lives easier Jesus didn't call us to easy that's not Christianity Christianity is not the easy life just study a little bit of church history and you'll find out the people of God is not easy you're not supposed to be because we're in the world we're in it but not of it right John 17 we'll get there we wanna we wanna avoid the charge of being bigoted of being abusive of being not with it not cool not you know whatever it is we wanna avoid these charges and Jesus says he's telling you the world hates you because it hates me and then we try and God forbid God help us we try to place Jesus on the same level with other religious groups and other religious leaders we start compromising that oh yeah well Jesus works for me but you know every role leads to God when you hear Christians say that you should just go run over and hug them and say stop stop don't say that don't believe that even more no all roads don't lead to God most roads lead to disaster and death and destruction only one road leads to God

Jesus told us I am the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but through me you can't get more narrow than that family our road is the narrow road the narrow faith truth is truth that's what we believe and we can't back up on it not even for a second not even for a second he's worthy of any inconvenience and worthy of any persecution worthy of any uncomfortableness he's worthy of it so the world is not our friend everything the world says isn't wrong don't get crazy everything the world says isn't wrong it's called common grace sometimes the world gets things right but it's not for the glory of Jesus so this world system is another name for it

[40 : 30] Peter talks about Babylon Revelation Babylon the system is anti-Christ it has to be because it's in darkness and Jesus tells us clearly in places like James chapter 4 verse 4 not to make friends with the world now we're going to talk about that what that means but let's understand what he says first of all you adulterous people do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God he doesn't mean you can't be friends with worldly people with people in the world how are you going to win them but he's talking about the system you can't make friends with the system you can't compromise you can't give in to the way of thinking the way of living the way of you know you

can't give in to the viewpoints of the system of darkness in order to get along can't do it why can't we do it because

Jesus is on the outside of that Jesus says the world hates me and therefore will hate you that's the tension that's the living of the outsiders within the system it's almost like we're not undercover though here's the thing we're not undercover we're not spies seeking to infiltrate no we're not undercover now my persecuted brother and sister has to do things a little differently so let's in other countries I'm not talking about them I'm talking about us in America we're not undercover let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven if I am a follower of him who is called the light of the world if I know him who is the light of the world if the light of the world lives in me that light is meant to shine it's meant to be seen so no we're not secret agents we're not 007 or 00 that's me we're in the world and we are walking in the midst we are loving in the midst we are speaking of

Jesus in the midst of the hatred and that's okay that's exactly where Jesus wants you right in the middle of the hatred that's not all bad news sometimes even the world will say good job but don't get but don't get but don't get don't get cocky and don't get satisfied there are people who will be brought out of the world they'll see Christ in you and they'll be drawn to you amen hallelujah so it's not all bad news but there is a conflict going on because the world hates what is not like it and if you're hated rejoice because it just means that maybe just maybe you're not of the world and Christ is shining in you and it's okay that's why we need each other that's why we need the gathering of the saints so we come together as like minded followers of Christ to encourage and strengthen one another in Jesus and be made strong under word and sacrament and prayer that's why you need the church because this is the embassy of the kingdom of heaven in the world you're safe here because you're with your family and here you'll be equipped to go back into the world and encouraged and strengthened to love your neighbor as yourself to love those in the world who hate you who may hate you you don't love the system you love the people so that by God's grace they may be brought out of darkness into the marvelous light just like you were