



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
May 12, 2019

JOHN 15:18-27

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Father, we thank you for your care for us. You know so much about us and you still care for all the little details in our lives for which we're grateful. Thank you for your protection. Protecting us from accidents and protecting us from danger and protecting us even from ourselves at times. We thank you for that. We thank you for comforting us when we're discouraged or depressed. We thank you that you care for us in those special ways that only you can do. Lord, we thank you for caring for us and guiding us along life's path and journey. Especially those times we don't exactly know what to do, that we can come to you and you guide us and care about us. I thank you, Lord, that you're not just a distant heavenly Father, but you're interacting with us every day. Personally relating to us in a way that demonstrates your care and compassion. Thank you. Lord, we're going to look at your word now and as we do we ask that you would speak to us through it and teach us some important things about who you are and what you have for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

As you know, John Snee is a fireman. So when he first became a fireman, he put on his fire hat the letters (Philippians 4:13) P-H-I-L and then 4:13 to remember that verse. Right on his fire hat. People would come up to him and say, "Who's Phil?" So if you don't know the scriptures, PHIL stands for Philippians. So that's the verse we're memorizing in Philippians 4:13. A very important verse that our children need to know. But it's not just for kids, is it? It's for all of us as we understand God's strength and how powerful it is in our own lives.

Today I want to talk to you about a specific issue. I want to talk to you about rejection. Rejection is something we all face. We need to know how to deal with it. If you're a young person, let's say middle school person, you can feel rejection because you didn't get accepted to go to a particular party, or you invite people to come over and spend some time with you and they say no, or you sit at a lunch table and other people don't come over there with you, so you can feel a sense of rejection.

In high school or college you end up feeling like you want to be part of a group, an "in" group, and that group doesn't accept you so you can feel rejection. When you get involved in a guy-girl relationship then that rejection can be rather discouraging and frustrating in the midst of that.

But even in a marriage relationship when two people are married and they have a good marriage relationship, you can feel rejection. One spouse says to the other one, "Hey, what do you think about going with me to this?" and the other spouse says, "No, I don't want to do this," and you can feel that sense of rejection inside.

You feel rejection at work in the workplace when you're trying to do what's right or you're trying to move ahead and there's rejection from other people that don't accept what you're doing.

You can experience rejection at work, you can experience it at school, even in your own family. Some of you parents and grandparents experience rejection from your kids at times. Not permanent rejection sometimes, but you wanted to do something or you wanted them to like something and they didn't.

There's that rejection that we all experience. We must know how to deal with rejection. And rejection is tied very closely into this deep need that we have of belonging. We all want to belong. We want to have friends. We want people to like us. We want to be popular or at least have a few people we're popular with. We want to have this sense of belonging. God has created us all with these deep belonging needs that we want to be connected and we want to belong. So it's really challenging when you want to belong to a group or you want to belong to some people, the cool people over there or the people that have the positions. Even in work they have the positions or the power. You want to be accepted by them and there's a frustration there when rejection takes place.

There's always a temptation in our lives when we want belonging to sacrifice our values. To say there must be something wrong with me. That's why I'm not accepted here. That's why I'm being rejected. Something must be wrong with me. Therefore sometimes we conform our ideas and our challenges and our thinking to be more like the people we want to have accept us, and thus we end up in this rather significant challenge. Because if we're always trying to conform to the people we want to approve us, then we end up with some real challenging places. Life becomes rather chaotic, it becomes confusing.

Jesus knew this. That's why He wanted to have a meeting. He says, "I've got to talk to you disciples about something very important. I want to talk to you about this idea of rejection and belonging. You need to understand these things." And in the midst of our passage today as we look at John 15, we're going to understand not only about what He's teaching His disciples about rejection and belonging (those two words, rejection and belonging), but I also want to teach you about rejection and belonging in general. I want you to understand more about what it means to belong.

So I'm going to share with you today from John 15. You can open your Bibles. I encourage you to do this. Open your Bibles and read along with us. I want you to stand with me in honor of God's word and I'm going to read verses 18-27 out of John 15. Let's see what Jesus has to say to His disciples and from this we'll glean some applications that will help us in our lives this week as we face the challenges of our own week.

Jesus says these words: *"If the world hates you, keep in mind 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. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my*

name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”

You may be seated.

If you were with us last week then you saw this passage. In fact let me take you back to last week's passage. Just look at how many times the word *love* is used. These are just the words right before the ones we are looking at now. Love, friendship. Jesus is saying I want to show you what it means to be connected. I want you to belong. I want you to love. I want you to live in that love. The first verse says – *Remain in that love*. I want you to live in it. I want you to experience the love of God. I want you to give love to God. And the last verse, notice, it says we are to *love each other*. There is a community that we enjoy. A place where we can experience belonging. A place where we can experience this connectedness. A place where we can have the affirmation with the craziness of this world we can find this peace together.

We live in a crazy world. There's all kinds of ideas out there. A lot of confusion. A lot of chaos. But it is within the community fellowship, this faith fellowship that we enjoy so much blessing. Now you can feel rejection inside of the church. Right? The church is made of imperfect people. We're all trying to grow and we make mistakes and we reject each other sometimes. And that's unfortunate. But there's this place where we can connect and we identify with each other. And that was the message from last Sunday that Jesus was saying. He was calling them friends, offering friendship to us with Jesus.

But notice how many times the word *hate* is used in the very next verses. These are the verses following the last ones. Hate is mentioned several times in the verses because God wants us to understand that there's a love and a belonging that takes place among the fellowship, among the community of believers. But you live in a world where things are different than that. And hate is common. And there are some challenges that we face.

So today I'm going to talk to you about this idea of belonging and this idea of not belonging. We must understand that. That's Jesus' message to us and we see that right in the first verse. In verse 18 it says this: *"If the world hates you..."* Let's just stop right there. Let's talk about the world. Because the world here isn't referring to people. It's referring to a system. There's a machine. There's the world system the Bible talks about that's running, that has an agenda. That agenda is counterproductive. It leads to destruction. It's tearing down all kinds of things that God created. There's an agenda in our world today, a machine that's moving in a direction to churn and to chew us up and to spit us out really. But it's more about the values that God has created and the world is set at odds with God.

We're talking about a world system, this system that tries to take something like life itself. That a beating heart is life. And there are many who encourage abortion. It's anti-God because of the beating heart that's there. The life that exists. There's an agenda many times in our world to move against the values that God has. Take marriage, for example. There's a move in our world system to create a new definition of marriage. That somehow a gay marriage is acceptable. It is not. It is wrong. It is not according to God's values.

So the world system has an agenda that's moving in a particular direction. The world has an agenda when it comes to pleasure. The pleasure is the goal. So people who were on this goal to find pleasure in their life, not the pleasure is wrong, but if it becomes the goal, the focal-point, then you get caught in this world system that ends up in an addictive, destructive, self-defeating place. It's a very difficult place to be.

The world system is moving towards destruction. It's spinning out of control. It's chaotic. And in the midst of this world system, all kinds of bad things are happening and there are people who are militant. These are people who are grieving the agenda. They want to move things forward. And these are people now. So we're talking about a system, the world that is speaking here. But in the midst of this world system there are real people who are militant who are trying to move this system along that is counter-God, that's anti-God. And then there are people who are naïve that are caught up in the midst of this. They are kind of flowing along with it all. So they determine right and wrong based on a world system and they just start accepting whatever is going on, whatever the world is saying.

Now it's in the midst of the agenda that world system that God is speaking and He's saying we're going to have a problem here. Because within God's kingdom, within His understanding of truth, we have some semblance of order, we have some understanding of who He is. We have some love and so on. But when you find yourself as a Christian in a world system that's going in a direction, it just cannibalizes people. It tears them up. So Jesus wants His disciples, the people He's been training now for three years to understand this. Because see, you can do all the right things to be accepted into the group and you're still going to be rejected at times. You're still not going to be accepted into the "in" crowd even though you do the right things. Even Jesus Christ Himself did everything right and they crucified Him. The reality is, you're going to experience something in the world. You need to understand, He says to them, and the thing you need to understand is you need to know how to deal with it, you need to know how to process it.

Here's what you're going to need to know. Notice the next verse. *Keep in mind that it hated me first. Verse 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.* Where do you have your belonging needs met? He's saying you don't belong here. You don't fit in. This isn't the place for you. So there's going to be some conflict that goes on inside of you. Because sometimes you're going to want to fit in, but you don't fit in, so there's going to be this internal struggle and there's this external struggle that takes place as well. So Jesus is trying to prepare His disciples for what they're going to experience going forward and He wants them to know what they can expect from the world.

I'm going to suggest there are three things mentioned in this passage that we can expect from the world. The first one has to do with this idea of hatred. This idea that people are going to...they're just going to be this animosity. If you say that you're a Christian or you say you have certain values or you take a stand for something that's righteous that you know from God's word, people are going to hate you. We're not talking about tolerance here. Okay? This isn't about I'll tolerate the differences you have and what I have. Okay. That's not what's being talked about here. We're saying that the world hates people who take a stand for righteousness, who are Jesus followers, who are moving in the right direction. That's what Jesus is saying to His disciples. You need to be ready for this. He says the world is going to hate you.

The second thing He says, and this is what we can expect from the world, is persecution. Yeah. So if you're a young person you may be called a Jesus freak because you hold onto Christian values. You might be in a classroom where they're talking about the origin of the world and if you say something like you believe in creation, you might get laughed at. But the persecution that Jesus is talking about is bigger than that. We'll talk about the rejection that we experience personally in the moment. But I want to look at this idea of persecution.

Jack Thomas sent me this article this week. He's not here today, but he actually wrote a reply on the article on the internet. So he sent it to me so I could look at it. I'm just going to read you part of the article that describes the global persecution of Christians. "The largest group of people today that are being persecuted around the world are Christians. Evidence suggests acts of violence and other intimidation against Christians are becoming more widespread with concrete efforts by some groups in parts of the Middle East and Africa to eradicate the Christian faith in their areas.

The BBC quoted Foreign Secretary Hunt as saying he thought political correctness was in part responsible for a lack of response among western nations to the rising problem of Christian persecution. This idea of being politically correct can end up in a place that's very damaging. He added that what we have forgotten in that atmosphere of political correctness is actually the Christians that are being persecuted are some of the poorest people on the planet." This isn't just talking about the United States. We're talking about all of these countries all over the world where Christians are being persecuted. Where they're blowing up churches, where they're killing Christians, where there are laws being enacted that any kind of evidence of the Christianity is cause for some kind of criminal offense.

Shoshana is a volunteer for Voice of the Martyrs and there are some brochures and information on the back table. I just went to the website christianpersecution.org this week and just pulled up some of the latest articles.

This is an article that appeared on May 3rd in Nigeria. "On Monday, April 29, Boko Haram fighters invaded the Christian community of Kuda near Madagali in Nigeria's Adamawa State. The terrorists surrounded the community and went door to door, killing as many as 25 people. The next day as security agents and community members prepared for the burials of their loved ones, Boko Haram members were spotted approaching for a second attack on the grieving community. As a result, funeral preparations were abandoned as bereaved believers, those from

neighboring communities and security agents fled.” Well there’s more stories in that particular headlines.

Here’s another one I saw May 9th again. This was published about China. “Authorities offer cash rewards for information on Christian activity. Authorities in Guangzhou have offered awards, offering as much as \$1500 for those who report the activities. Officials in Guangzhou are willing to pay for information on house churches like this one” (and they have a picture of it). “Pray for Christians in Guangzhou as the government continues its crackdown on religious institutions that do not submit it to the communist party.”

All over the world today there's a lot of persecution and the persecution is significant. Jesus wants to prepare His disciples for the pain that they are going to experience. Ten of the disciples are martyrs. Jesus wants them to know about the pain of persecution. We as Christians can identify with our brothers and sisters around the world who are being persecuted just because they are Christians.

The world will hate you is what Jesus said. We can expect the persecution in our lives. And yes, that persecution occurs worldwide, but it also occurs in America on high school campuses, on college campuses. You take a stand for your faith and you are laughed at, ridiculed. Jesus wants you to know about that. That’s a very important part of understanding the rejection that will take place in our world today.

The third thing that we can expect is sinfulness. Sinfulness is this blatant violation of what God has designed. Sinfulness. The sinfulness that people have a freedom to just violate and do whatever they feel like doing. Not adhering to the design that God has. This world system perpetuates sinfulness. For example, in our world system the value of sex has been decreased to some biological function or a statement of “hey I like you” or something. And what we know about sex is it’s a very valuable thing in God’s word, it’s held in the sanctity of a marriage relationship. It’s a very powerful tool, a very important expression designed inside of that marriage relationship. But the world just said you can do whatever you feel like doing. So sin is rampant. You can expect sin in all kinds of different areas of life.

That’s what He’s saying in verse 22. He says – *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.* So you can expect these things from the world. This is what you can expect.

See, I think we have an obligation to help our young people who turn ten, eleven, twelve years old to understand when you get to school it’s not about all kinds of having friends. It's not just about getting into the “in” crowd. You’re going to experience some challenges in your heart. You’re going to either want to be accepted by these people and the sacrifice or want to sacrifice your values. Sacrifice what God has placed inside of you. Your actual identity of what you know to be right and wrong, you will have a feeling, you will have a desire to sacrifice that in order to belong. It's very common that people want to belong and therefore they sacrifice the very values that they have.

A young lady, a teenager might say, “Oh I really want to belong to this guy,” so she sacrifices her desire to be sexually pure in order to belong. So she gives up something in order to belong. And then what happens? Of course this guy who has a relationship with her casts her aside when he gets what he wants. She doesn’t get her belonging. She’s lost something very important about these values.

I just want you to see the rejection can be a motivation to do all kinds of bad things inside. Jesus is addressing that to them. You just need to know what you can expect from the world because the world is on this trajectory, on a path that leads to all kinds of self-destructions and problems.

So let’s ask the question. In the passage, what are some things we need to remember in the midst of this challenge that we face? Well first of all, in verse 19 we fit in with Jesus, not with the world. When you understand this, this is one of the keys to life. If you get this understanding that living for Jesus produces much more satisfaction and fulfillment and the deepest longings are met through a relationship with Him, this is powerful. It’s life-changing is what it is. He says – *You do not belong to the world.* Your belonging needs are not met in the world, they are met in this relationship with Christ. And He says – *I have chosen you out of the world.* Wow.

Secondly, we’re connected to the truth. Notice the last verses. It says in verse 26 – *When the Advocate comes (that’s the Holy Spirit), whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.*

There’s this truth that we have access to that is absolute, that doesn’t move around from people group to people group. It is truth that is so powerful that you can stake your life on it. That truth cuts through everything and allows you to experience a sense of identity and confidence in life.

I am so troubled by the reports that we hear in our community and around of young people who, because of wanting to belong and feeling that they don’t fit in, end up committing suicide or attempting suicide or considering suicide. It’s just such a terrible thing that happens. In our world there’s a lot of confusion and chaos. It’s a problem. And Jesus is saying your belonging needs are met in Jesus Christ. That’s what He’s saying here. It’s so powerful. You have the truth. You are connected to the truth.

And the third thing is that we are witnesses. We need to share about that truth. We have something that other people need. We have a message. You see, there are militants in the world that have an agenda that move you along in a particular way. Then there are naïve people within that or just go along with the flow because that seems to be where everybody’s headed and that’s what popular opinion says is right and wrong, so they’re just going along with the crowd. But there are some people who are saying, “I am not happy with where this world is going. I am not happy with what my work is doing to me. I am not happy with the chaos that I experience. I want something else.”

We have the truth. So Jesus is saying to His disciples you’ve got to testify. You’ve got to tell them. Because there is a group of people out there who are interested in something more than what’s currently available to them in the world system. They want something bigger and better.

They want to know Jesus Christ who will satisfy them in a deeper way. So people are coming to Jesus Christ because of your witness and my witness.

If we get this idea down, we understand there's this machine of the world system that's chopping people up, you'll have compassion for these people that are getting chopped up. You'll be saying, "Boy, I can help you. I've got a message I know can help you. It's Jesus Christ. He's where you can belong." These deep-seeded needs that you have that have you running from girl to girl to girl, or job, or people groups, or whatever you're running around trying to find satisfaction, you will not find them there. You don't belong here. All of us belong to Jesus Christ. And the person who's sucked into this and going on and on in this confusion of the world system often people are saying, "I want something different." That's why we testify. That's why we have a message that we share the gospel with other people because this is lifechanging.

I'm part of a movement called the 4/14 Movement in which we're trying to share family ministry with people around the world. So I work on a team of five leaders. There are four of us in the United States. Now six. Four leaders in the United States, one in India, and one in Indonesia. We have a message of sharing Jesus Christ with the world. There are a lot of people that work with us in the midst of these groups that are helping to strengthen families in cultures so those families can make a change in society.

I say that to tell you about this city way down here at the bottom, Bangalore. You can see it's southern India. Because there's P.C. Mathew who's one of these global leaders with me. He lives in Bangalore, India and runs the urban India ministry. I'm just so encouraged by my last meeting with him because they're saying up here in Nepal (one of the most difficult countries for Christians), the church is growing faster than anywhere in the world. It's just growing in a huge dimension. You can imagine if there's a lot of persecution in an area, if you're a Christian you better believe it. Because you don't have like a nominal Christian in Nepal. The church is growing so rapidly. So he's sending missionaries from India up to Nepal to help them develop family ministries. That's what they're doing. So that in the church the family can be strengthened. It's like our church does. We're a family ministry church. We're just one of many, many churches within the world. We're trying to strengthen the family unity using the principles of Jesus Christ to help the family be strong. That's our objective.

In China, Jack Edgar and head of Awana (or he was the head of Awana; he left there now), he started a family ministry. Jack says to me last year, "Two hundred businessmen came to Washington D.C. and I had opportunity to speak to them and they're really concerned about the families. The family is really breaking down in China. And when they heard me talk about the ministries that they offer, they asked me to come. Now of course in China you can't come and outwardly share your faith. So we're going in as businessmen and we want to share. Scott, would you come with me?" Well I get invitations to go to these places and most of the time I say no.

I'm thinking about going to Dubai in November and that's where our next meeting is in Dubai. It's just a fascinating city where in order to live in Dubai, you must work there. So there's pressure on the family because if you lose your job you have to move out. So there's a lot of pressure on the family. So in November (depending on my family dynamics and our situation) I may go to Dubai and I'll share more about that with you if I do.

I share that with you because I'm hearing more and more reports about how God is working in these other countries. That there is persecution in many of these countries, but God is at work in a powerful way because people like P.C. Mathew are sharing their faith and they're helping other people understand what that's like. It's so important for us to be witnesses and to share the message of Jesus Christ with other people because people are waiting. They want the message and the contemporary world message that's out there is dangerous. It's totally unfulfilling for people.

Let me finish with five ways spiritually healthy people handle rejection. Right from the passage. I would suggest you consider this not only because of the persecution that you might experience because of your faith, but any kind of rejection you experience, you need to know these things because this is God's approach to dealing with the rejection that we may experience in our own lives.

Number one: Remind yourself that you are chosen. Verse 19 says – *You do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.* The word church in the Greek is the word *ekklesia*. *Ek* means out, *klesia* means called. *Ekklesia*, called out ones. We are called out of the world. That's why we're called the church. We're the called out ones, number one.

Number two: You want to entrust your belonging needs to Jesus Christ. Because you have entrusted your belonging needs to a spouse or a girlfriend or boyfriend or to a group of some kind or to a school or to teachers or to a boss. If you entrust those to them, you're going to be in trouble. Because those change and they actually lead you down a path. God calls the path a broad path. Jesus says there's a broad path. In a way it's broad. Right? There's a lot of people on it and they're heading down. It's well-trodden. It's broad. It's leading somewhere. It's leading to destruction. There's a narrow path. Why is it narrow? Because there's not a lot of people on there. You and I are on that path. And we're tempted to go over to the broad path. So Jesus is warning don't go over to the broad path. That's destruction in your way. Don't go there. Entrust your belonging needs to Jesus.

Number three: Don't allow a belonging to compromise your values. It happens all the time. You love your brother or your mother or your father or someone in your family, so you start sacrificing some values you have for them. Or you have someone you enjoy being with so you start changing your convictions. It changes your vocabulary. If you want to fit in in middle school, you want to fit into the crowd, then you start developing in your language toilet language or cursing. And when you develop the toilet language or the cursing into your vocabulary, it changes who you are. You sacrifice your values. Why? So you can belong to something or to someone. Be careful with that that you don't allow belonging to compromise your values.

Next: Rely on the Holy Spirit as your coach. I say that because the word *advocate* here is the word *parakletos*. Come alongside to help. *Para*, come along. *Kletos*, called to help is the idea. So *parakletos* is translated in versions to be advocate, or helper, or counselor, comforter. I'm using the word 'coach' here to describe that. You need to know that the Holy Spirit wants to coach you through life. It's going to be hard. You're going to need the comfort that God provides to go through the challenges of rejection that you might experience in life.

And lastly: Commit yourself to communicating the truth. There's a world out there that needs our help. I'm not talking about the world system here. Yes, there are some people called to try to change the world system and to try to make things better. So you see today in the news some people who are trying to change the laws about abortion in Alabama and other places. They are working within the system to try to change that. That's great, but that's not what I'm talking about at the moment. I'm talking about the people who are hurting, who we have compassion on, who need Jesus Christ. It will change their lives and we have the truth and that's why we testify about that because we know Jesus.

In this case, "*You have been with me from the beginning,*" He says to His disciples. But we've been with Jesus. We know Him. I can tell you about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I can tell you what He does for me. That testimony that you have about what God is doing in your life is powerful. It's something that can offer tremendous hope to people that are hurting in our world today.

I just want to suggest if you realize that your belonging needs are out of place, the first step is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To say, "God, I don't have that. I need that personal relationship. I want to re-center myself on you. I want to be committed to you. I want to trust you as my Lord and Savior." And when you make that commitment, amazing things happen in your own heart. You're able to balance those belonging needs in a way that allows them to rest on Jesus Christ. That's where we start is a personal relationship with Jesus.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] It's interesting, Lord, that we can call you Father. Just describing that sense of belonging and that relationship that we enjoy. Lord, we know there are a lot of things in our world that want to rob us of the joy that we can have and we want to have that joy with you. We know that you provide us with that joy. I pray that you'd provide that in our hearts, those belonging needs to be met so we can have that joy be made complete in our hearts. We know that this place that we live in right now is not our home, but we get attached here and we try to belong sometimes when we shouldn't. So we ask you, Lord, to convict us. Draw us back to yourself. Help us to be centered on you, even to make changes in our lives and our lifestyle that conform to the truth and belonging to you. Lord, do that in our hearts. Teach us what it means to follow you. In Jesus' name, amen.