

Walk In Love In A World Of Hate

John 15:12-27

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In John 15:1-11, we looked at it last week, Jesus had described the importance of a relationship of His disciples to Him by giving us the seventh “I Am” statement, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” The focus was that we abide in Him, and if we abide in Him, that we’ll bring forth fruit. We abide in Him by obedience, by prayer, and by keeping His commandments. Jesus talked about the relationship between Himself and His disciples. Well, there are two other relationships in John 15 that I want to outline for you that He describes. The second one we look at tonight in verses 12-17 is a relationship between the disciples and each other, the relationship between disciples and believers in the body of Christ; so we must be properly related to God, and then we must be properly related to one another in the body of Christ. The third aspect that He covers tonight in our text is Jesus speaks of our relationship as believers to the world around us. That begins in verses 18-27, and technically into John 16:1-4.

Jesus starts off by speaking of the relationship between believers, one with another. Let’s read it, verses 12-17. He gives them a commandment. He says, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another,” the word “love” is our Greek word *agapao*, or *agape* love, “as I have loved you. 13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. 15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. 16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. 17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

Why is Jesus, at this point in time in the this Upper Room Discourse, telling the disciples that they need to love one another? Well, the other gospels make it clear that at this time in the upper room they were arguing with one another. They were actually debating the subject of who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of God. Jesus is going to go to the cross and be crucified in just a few hours, and His faithful followers are, “I’m going to be the greatest,” “No, I’m going to be the greatest,” “No, I’m going to be the greatest.” Peter saying, “Did you see me walk on water? I’m going to be the greatest.” They’re bragging and boasting. They’re jealous and fighting with one another. Jesus tells them that they need to love one another. He knew that unity was the only way for them to maintain an adequate witness to the world around them. The same is true of us tonight—for us to walk in love and have unity in the church, not at the sake of purity, purity always comes before unity. We don’t give up the purity in order to have unity. We must be holy before we can be in harmony. We know that we need to get along and love one another if we’re going to have an effective witness to the watching world.

Go back with me to John 13:34, we saw it a few weeks ago, Jesus actually speaks pretty much the same commandment, “A new commandment,” which is actually a new in quality, a new

dimension in love, a new kind of commandment. Some say this is the eleventh commandment after the Ten Commandments. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another," there again is the same thing that Jesus gives them in the upper room, "as I have loved you," that's the qualifying statement, "that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." That's the mark of the believer. The identifying mark of a true believer is that we love one another. Going back to John 15:12, Jesus again commands them. Now, I emphasize that because it is what's called a command. It's an imperative. This is an interesting thing, and I know I've shared it before but I'll share it again, if Jesus commands us to love one another, Jesus gives us the ability to do that. We might look at someone and say, "I can't love them." This may be a verse tonight that some of you wish wasn't in the Bible because there's somebody in the church that you don't love and you don't want to love; yet the Bible commands us, and He'll give us the ability.

The second thing that I think about is that not only will He give us the ability, but love, since it's commanded, is not an emotion. You can't command emotion. A guy can't walk up to a young girl and say, "I command you to love me!" WHAM! He gets hit with a purse. It's just not going to work, right? Yet, God gives us a command that we can love, so the love here is not necessarily an emotion or a feeling, it's a commitment we make. I love that concept that love is not a passing emotion, it's a continual devotion.

In a marriage relationship you won't always feel the emotion of love. You say, "Well, I don't feel love for you anymore, so I want to get a divorce." If that were the case, you'd probably get a divorce every couple days or so because after forty years of marriage you don't wake up in the morning and jump up on the bed and sing, "I love you!" The sun's glistening off the bacon and the eggs that she makes for you in the morning, and a little bird's singing in the window, you know. There's not always that emotion, but you commit to love in the relationship for richer, for poorer, sickness and health, til death do us part according to God's holy ordinances. You make a commitment, a covenant, one with another. Love isn't just a passing emotion, it's a continual devotion; and agape love is seeking the highest good of the object loved. It's treating that person the way God actually treats you, so He says you're to love one another. It's not an option, it's a command; and He gives us the power to do just that.

Note the comparative clause in verse 12, even "as I have loved you." This is the Christian standard. Jesus gives us a command, gives us the ability, and then says, "This is the example, this is the model, this is the standard. You do it the way I have loved you." He goes on to say, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He's predicting what He's going to do in just a few hours. He's in the upper room. He'll go to Gethsemane, be arrested, crucified, and He's going to demonstrate by dying on the cross what it really means to love sacrificially, self-denyingly, and givingly. In Ephesians 5:25, to go back to the subject of marriage once again, the instruction there is for husbands to love, agape, their wives; and he goes on to qualify it, "even as Christ also loved the church." How did Christ love the church? He "gave himself for it, 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Let me give you four elements of this agape love from this text. It's to be sacrificial. Look at verses 13-14. As I already pointed out, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus would lay down His life for His enemies, even for people who were enemies of His, He would die for the sins of the world. He calls His disciples, and you and me, "friends," what an endearing term that is, but He's predicting the cross and the picture of the love of God seen when Jesus gave Himself. (Tonight, we're going to share communion together. I trust you got the elements. At the end of my message when I'm praying, if you didn't get a cup and the wafer, you can actually get up and run to the back of the church, come back if you can, or just raise your hand and one of the ushers will bring a tray for you to get the elements. Tonight when we close the message, we're going to pray together and eat the bread and drink the cup and remember the Lord's death.)

Agape love is giving. It's sacrificial. In John 3:16, "For God so loved," agaped, "the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." In Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If you're loving your brothers and sisters in Christ sacrificially, then you're doing what God has commanded.

Secondly, you're to do it with intimacy; that is, this love we're to have is a love between friends. He says in John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants," the Greek word is *doulos*, or bondslaves, "for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Friends share secrets. They share intimate knowledge with one another. In the body of Christ we have this intimate loving relationship where we share our hearts and pray for one another. What a blessing that is. Even our sorrows, we pray for one another, and Jesus knows our sorrows and our hearts.

Agape love also involves initiative. I love this passage. Look at the first part of verse 16. He says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you," or will give it to you. Notice that God is the One who takes the initiative in our love relationship with Him, so we should take the initiative in showing agape love to other people, reaching out to them. By the way, this is a clear reference to the election of God in choosing us. Now, He's talking to His disciples. Judas has left the upper room...but it also is taught very clearly in the Bible that God has chosen us, Ephesians 1:4, where it says that we are elect by the foreknowledge of God, "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," so rather than resist, fight, or try to figure that out, you should just rejoice in that, "I'm chosen," if you are a child of God.

You'll never be able to understand the issue of God's sovereignty and man's free will—Did I chose Him or did He choose me? And, "Where does my will come in and God's sovereign choice come in?" I think that both are taught in the Scriptures. We can't, with our own human minds, reconcile them; but I like the idea that they reconcile at a higher unity. God knows how they work together, and that's enough for us to accept it. They're both taught in the Scriptures. I love the idea that God chose me. I would never have chosen me. I would never have chosen you, but the Bible says that God's chosen the foolish things of the world—nobody wants to say,

“Amen,” to that. It’s funny how whenever I quote that Scripture there’s just a silent hush that comes over the sanctuary, “He’s talking about himself.” “God hath chosen the foolish things... the weak things...And base things...and things which are despised...and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

I was reminded this afternoon, as I was studying this passage, that when I was a young boy and became a Christian, my mother, who went to be with the Lord many years ago, shared this verse with me and told me that this is the verse that the Lord gave to her when she accepted Christ as a young teenage girl, the only Christian in her family. She was born and raised in Wisconsin. None of her family were believers, but she came to Christ and met the Lord as her Savior. She got on a bus at about 17 years of age and came across the United States to Los Angeles to go to Bible college, where she met my dad. She shared with me that this was her life verse, that God spoke to her and said that He had chosen her and she should go forth and bring forth fruit, that her fruit should remain, and whatever she would ask the Father would give it to her. I can’t help but sometimes think that perhaps my life and ministry are the fruit of my mother’s prayers and God calling her and then calling me, and God using me to bear fruit and the idea that God chose my mom and God chose me and God chose you. If you’re a child of God tonight, you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, just think about that. He actually chose me. He picked me. That’s amazing.

Maybe when you were younger, you had the experience of being in elementary or middle school. They would go out for a time of physical education, and you would have maybe recess. The captains would actually pick teams, and you were always the last one picked. You knew what it felt like to be the last one. They’d say, “Okay, we’ll take ‘em.” You weren’t really picked, you were just standing there so they said, “Okay, you can be on our team. You can play third base, not the position, the base. Just lie on the ground there and don’t move, okay? or stand way in the corner and if the ball comes to you, don’t touch it. Just let somebody else get it okay?”

To think that God in heaven, infinite God, would actually reach down and choose me. It’s just amazing to think about. Why am I saved? Why am I walking with God? Why do I have this relationship to Jesus? Because of God’s grace and God’s love and God’s mercy, that He reached down and actually chose you. Not only chose you, but (verse 16) “...ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit,” that you should just walk humbly with your God and that God would bring forth from your life glorious fruit. Remember earlier in John 15 we read about abiding in Him, that our lives might bring forth much fruit (verse 5) for the glory of God. He has chosen us. He took the initiative.

I would say a fourth characteristic of this agape love is productiveness in verse 16, the fruit, that if you love the Lord and you love other people, that you can’t help but be a fruit bearer, that your life will bear fruit for the glory of God. Someone said, “Friendship with Jesus involves the obligation of brotherly love.” You can’t be a child of God and not have the love of God for other brothers and sisters in Christ, so the evidence that you have been born again, the Spirit of God lives in you, is that you love other believers.

I remember when I got saved, I loved going to church. I loved being with Christians. You know, before you get saved, and you're not born again, it's not really the most enjoyable thing to be around Christians. They're just kind of creepy, you know, and it's like, "I don't want to be around them. They make me feel uncomfortable." Now that you're a Christian, you love to be around Christians. It's an evident sign that you are a child of God. The Bible says it like this, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." I love that. You know that you've been born again in that you love other believers.

We find next that friendship with Jesus also results in enduring the world's hatred. In verses 1-11 we have our relationship to Christ as the vine and we're the branches, and our lives bear fruit when we abide in Him. Then we found in verses 12-17 that we actually had a relationship with other believers and we're to love one another. Notice verse 12 opens with a command and closes with a command in verse 17. Then, beginning in verse 18 to 27, we now have a warning about our relationship to the world. We're properly related to God, properly related to others in the family of God, but now we go into the world. We're in the world, but we're not of the world; and we're going to find out that the world will be hostile to us and actually persecute us.

It first gives the description of the world's hatred in verses 18-20. Let's read that passage. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord," by the way, that was said in John 13:16, after Jesus had washed their feet and said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet." He says, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

Jesus makes it clear that they should love one another, yet from the world they should expect hatred and persecution. It's funny that the world actually praises dead saints but persecutes living saints. I think that's interesting. If you're really a child of God, the Bible actually says in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If you're living the way God wants you to live, abiding in Christ, loving others, you're going to come into conflict and be opposed by the world around you. Jesus makes it clear that they should love each other, but they will be persecuted by the world.

All of the disciples that Jesus was speaking to, save the apostle John, the author of this gospel, suffered a martyr's death. He's actually warning them about the hostility and opposition that they're going to encounter in the world. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword...a man...against his father, and the daughter against her mother," that He comes actually with that division. Many times, do you notice that when you became a Christian, your friends, who were in the world and non-Christians, kind of don't want to be around you anymore. You used to be really fun to hang out with, and now you're boring and not fun anymore. They just kind of drop off. I found that out when I became a

Christian. I really lost all of my friends, so called, but I found a friend in Jesus. Then God brought new people into my life, brothers and sisters in the family of God. What a blessed thing that is.

You can follow the pattern all through the book of Acts, they were persecuted. Stephen, the first martyr in Acts 7, was stoned to death because he was preaching. They tore their clothes and ran on him and stoned him to death. He wore the martyr's crown, and Jesus welcomed him into glory. James, the brother of our Lord, was put to death and martyred. All of the disciples were martyred for their faith. Jesus said, "You will be persecuted. You will be suffering for My sake in verse 18, "...the world hate you."

What does Jesus mean by "the world?" The word "world" there is actually about the evil world system apart from God. It has, in this text, the idea of the unbelieving world, non-Christians. Sometimes we use that expression, "They're worldly," or "They're of the world," or "They think like the world." John tells us in 1 John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," so what motivates these non-believing people? Lust of the flesh, their passions; lust of the eyes, their possessions; and the pride of life, their position. This is what motivates them.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness and was tempted to turn the stones into bread—the lust of the flesh. When He was tempted to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple and the angels would catch Him up and people would follow Him—pride of life. When He was tempted of the devil, "Fall down and worship me, and I'll give you the kingdom and everything that goes along with it," He was actually being tempted there to worship satan. It's an interesting thing because he said, "I'll give you all of these kingdoms of the world, they're mine, if you fall down and worship me," the lust of the eyes.

The world is the unbelieving world, the non-Christian world, the world apart from God. It speaks of the evil world system. It's not talking about the physical world as being intrinsically evil, although it's under the curse, but it's talking about the worldly system—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. As a Christian, you live among unbelieving people. You go to work, you live in the neighborhood, you might live in your home with non-Christians in your family and find that many times that brings you into conflict with them. The source of the hatred is (verse 18) the world. He makes it clear, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

Let me break this section down just a bit for you. Why does the world hate Christians? First, verse 18, because of their hatred for Christ. It's not really directed toward you as much as it's vented toward you because of their hatred for Christ, so don't take it personally. They're living in enmity with God. They hate God, so they take it out on you. Notice it in verse 18, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." The persecution is because they actually hate God and Jesus Christ. It's interesting that Saul of Tarsus was attacking believers thinking that he was doing God a service. It's interesting that Jesus, when He

apprehended Saul on the Damascus road said, "Why do you persecute Me?" Saul was attacking Christians, but Jesus said, "You're persecuting Me," by persecuting these Christians, he was actually persecuting Jesus.

Secondly, notice, because we do not belong to the world, the world hates us. We're not part of the world and the worldly philosophy. Verse 19, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own," believe me, the world loves its own. The Mafia loves its own, the Hollywood crowd loves its own, and the unbelieving world loves its own. It's like a mutual admiration club. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." They persecute us because we do not belong to them. We're not part of the world. Our speech, our standards, and our commitment to serving God is different.

That's why sometimes if you're a Christian, and you have a non-Christian family, the holidays can be so difficult. You know, you're going over for Thanksgiving dinner with a bunch of heathens. It's a mission field. Maybe they're all laughing, drinking, and having a good time and then you show up, "The Christian's here, bummer! We can't cuss anymore. They're going to be looking at me when I'm drinking. I can't tell my dirty jokes anymore." You just throw a quench on the whole thing, you know, just a wet blanket. "Oh man, did you have to show up?" But you're really a light in a dark place, and that's what we're doing, we're manifesting God's light in a dark place. It's like bugs when you overturn a log. They don't go, "Oh! Thank you! I so appreciate that. I've been wanting to get some sunshine." They go running and scattering and try to hide, you know. They love the darkness rather than light, so you come in with your light, "Get that light bulb out of here!" "All I did was show up. I didn't say a word." You don't have to say a word, they just know that you're a Christian, and they persecute you. You're not one of them.

It's interesting, all you have to do is be different to be persecuted. I was actually reading a sermon illustration of a guy who invented the umbrella. The first guy to ever invent an umbrella was in London, England. He made an umbrella, popped it up, and was walking down the street. People were so freaked out by this umbrella, they called it a roof on a pole, that they started throwing rocks at him and chased him out of town. All you gotta do is be different and people just freak out. It's interesting that as Christians, we come into conflict with the world.

In Romans 12, Paul says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," so we're not to be conformed, we're to be transformed as we go into the world but are not of the world. Again, that old illustration of the boat on the water: the boat is fine when it's on the water, but when the water gets in the boat, then the boat sinks. We're to be in the world, but we're not to be like the world or thinking or acting like the world. When we are living godly, it's going to bring us into opposition with the world.

Thirdly, notice that they persecute us as believers because the world rejects God's Word. That's another thing that brings us into conflict with an unbeliever. Notice it in verse 20. It says, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying," there it is, "they will

keep yours also.” It’s an issue of you are committed to God’s Word; they want nothing to do with God’s Word. In verses 21-25, Jesus actually gives them the reason for the world’s hatred. He describes the world’s hatred and then gives us the reason for the world’s hatred because they keep not my Word.

Notice in verses 22-25 that the world persecutes the believer because we expose their sin. Verse 22, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin,” what He means by that is they had not had any excuse for their sin. They now have no excuse for their sin. They see the light, and light brings responsibility. That’s basically the principle there. I came, they saw the light, they heard the truth, therefore they have no excuse for their sinfulness.

In verse 23, “He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” That’s a reference to Psalm 69:4. Notice He uses God’s Word again to say that the Word of God prophesied that this would happen.

I want you to go back to verse 22 and notice that He came and now they have no excuse for their sin. Our very presence, like the presence of the Lord, and when you are in the world you’re bringing the presence of Jesus, brings them conviction (we’ll see that next week, the Spirit is come to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment) and exposes their sinful behavior like a light exposes the evil of the darkness. Notice in verse 23, “He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” That statement makes it clear that you can’t reject Jesus and love God the Father, you can’t reject Jesus Christ and have God the Father, you can’t love God the Father and hate God the Son, “He that hateth me hateth my Father also,” and if you don’t have Jesus, then you have not God the Father. Jesus then says, “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did,” so they have a responsibility for their sin, “but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” This is a statement here that applies to all believers. They hate you without a cause. They hate you for Jesus’ sake. They hate you because they hate Jesus. They hate you because you convict them of their sin, and they come against you.

In verses 26-27 is the answer to the world’s hatred. How do we respond to the world’s hatred? I love it. “But when the Comforter,” the Holy Spirit, “is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: 27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” I only want to read John 16:1-4 so you see it in the context that ties in with John 15. “These things,” so there’s no break between John 15 and 16, “have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended,” or you won’t stumble. I warned you about this persecution so you won’t be stumbled. “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning,

because I was with you.” You see how the first four verses of John 16 tie in with what we read in John 15, at the end of the chapter, with a warning about the persecution.

We’re going to go into more depth next Wednesday night on verses 26-27 because we’re going to tie it in with John 16, but we will face persecution in the world. It’s interesting that He closes by talking about the Comforter again. We got this last week in verse 26. The “Comforter” is the Greek word *parakletos*, which means one who comes alongside of you to help, strengthen, and comfort you. It’s not just kind of a, “Now, now, now,” patting you on the back, “everything will be okay.” It’s actually to strengthen you, to assist you, to help you. That’s why He’s called the Helper, the Comforter, the *parakletos*.

Notice the Trinity in this passage. We have here the Comforter who is the Holy Spirit, “whom I will send,” that is, God the Son, and He comes, “from the Father.” In that one verse you have a reference to the triune nature of God. Jesus sending the Spirit, coming from the Father, and it is the Holy Spirit—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When He comes, “he,” personal pronoun *ekeinos*, “shall testify of me.” Underline, if you feel so led, and highlight that statement at the end of verse 26, “he shall testify of me.” Again, “he” is a personal pronoun. The Holy Spirit is not a force. It’s not an “it.” He’s the third Person of the Godhead. What is His primary ministry and duty? To testify of Jesus Christ. That is so foundational and central and important. Whenever the Holy Spirit is at work, Jesus Christ is glorified. Amen? If ever there’s a so-called “work of the Spirit” and it’s not exalting and magnifying and glorifying and lifting up Jesus, that’s not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s job is to glorify Jesus.

Just a little footnote for you Bible students. It’s interesting, too, the most Christ-exalting books of the Bible are Colossians and Hebrews. It’s so interesting to me that in these Christ-exalting letters of the New Testament, you find almost no reference to the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit doesn’t come to talk about Himself, He’s come to talk about Jesus. When the Holy Spirit is really working, that’s what’s happening, we’re talking about Jesus. Be careful. When somebody says, “I’m a Spirit-filled Christian,” but all they want to talk about is the Holy Ghost, “Holy Ghost, Holy Ghost, Holy Ghost, Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,” and that’s all they ever want to talk about, I’m not so sure that’s the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit doesn’t talk about Himself. The Holy Spirit talks about Jesus. He came to testify of Jesus.

Jesus closes by saying, verse 27, “And ye also shall bear witness,” testify of Me also, “because ye have been with me from the beginning.” They would be filled with the Holy Spirit, and they would testify to the world about Jesus Christ. That’s what we’re supposed to do. So, we have our relationship to Christ, He is the vine, we’re the branches, we abide in Him; we have our relationship to other believers, we’re to love one another as Christ loved us; and we have our relationship to the world around us, we will be persecuted for Christ’s sake. Let’s pray.