



*If the world hates you, you must realise that it hated me before it hated you.
If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own;
but because you do not belong to the world,
because my choice of you has drawn you out of the world, that is why the world hates you.
Remember the words I said to you: A servant is not greater than his master.
If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too;
if they kept my word, they will keep yours as well.
But it will be on my account that they will do all this to you,
because they do not know the one who sent me.
If I had not come, if I had not spoken to them, they would have been blameless;
but as it is they have no excuse for their sin.
Anyone who hates me hates my Father.
If I had not performed such works among them as no one else has ever done,
they would be blameless;
but as it is, in spite of what they have seen, they hate both me and my Father.
But all this was only to fulfil the words written in their Law: They hated me without reason.
When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness.
And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.
I have told you all this so that you may not fall away.
They will expel you from the synagogues,
and indeed the time is coming when anyone who kills you
will think he is doing a holy service to God.
They will do these things because they have never known either the Father or me.
But I have told you all this, so that when the time for it comes
you may remember that I told you.*

John 15:18 to 16:4

When the Paraclete comes... he will be my witness

Wednesday 4th week before Lent

John draws a sharp line between the Christian community and everyone else outside. The world outside the church 'hates' the church, persecutes it and is totally rejected by God. Some Christian fringe groups do try to live by this kind of framework. The majority does not. We may in these verses feel most alienated from John's world-view. It is good to realise that, with the exception of *Revelation*, no other New Testament writer sees the world like this. Even though Paul drew a contrast between "flesh" and Spirit" and experienced persecution and rejection by non-Christians, yet he had a deep respect for Rome and its governance despite its paganism. Luke's gospel and Acts commend Christians to the Roman authorities as being good citizens of the empire.

When we become concerned, even upset, at the conflicting positions adopted across the Christian community, it is useful to remember that the New Testament, reflecting the apostolic church, contains radically different and conflicting views, theologies and interpretations. There is no such thing as 'biblical teaching', only a choice between different options that the Testaments offer. Rather than being a source of confusion, this is a spiritual charter of freedom, a gift of grace itself.