

Monday, August 17, 2020
Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."

John 17: 14-15

It's hard to be passive-aggressive and still be "salt and light" in the world. It is tempting to be passive-aggressive, though, when the ones you are trying to be a blessing to "hate" you. That's how Jesus says the world feels about Christians who actively try to represent Jesus in the world. The reading above is an excerpt from Jesus' prayer to His Father just before He is arrested in Gethsemane. In this part of His prayer, Jesus is praying for His disciples (and us) because it is not easy to be His representatives in this world.

A passive-aggressive approach to being hated by the world would be to ignore the needs of the world, including its greatest need: Jesus Christ! But in His prayer, Jesus is making it pretty clear that He wants us to continue in our mission in the world in spite of the reception that we are often given by many people in the world. In Jesus' prayer, He says to His Father, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." This must mean that He wants us to keep at it even though we are not generally appreciated by those we are trying to share the Gospel with.

If I allow my passive-aggressive trait to come out, I would likely just say, "Fine. Have it your way. It makes my life easier not to worry about you anyway." But does that sound at all like the Lord we serve? Absolutely not. Jesus Himself was not passive-aggressive when He was being nailed to the cross. He may have been "passive," but certainly not "aggressive." He even prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," even as they were hammering the nails into His hands and feet!

There's no doubt about it ... in order for you and me to continue to be about the mission of making disciples of Jesus and of loving people who don't want to be loved by us, we need to develop a thick skin while at the same time keeping a soft heart. After all, we're not doing this for our own good, but for the good of those that Jesus died on the cross for, and for the glory of God.

I find it very easy to let the devil get inside my mind and tell me to just focus on loving the people who want to be loved by me and by Jesus. Churches can develop the very same attitude of "we're here if they want us." I think Jesus, however, has set the example of love by coming and dying for a world who didn't ask Him to. The Bible says, "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (*Romans 5: 8*) So, even WHILE the world is hating the idea of Christianity and even Christians themselves, we continue to love the world because it's the same world that Jesus loved when He came to die on the cross.

God's Peace!
Pastor Jim