

How to live as a Jesus follower in a culture that is opposed to Him and His ways

Now quick side bar – I'm not sure we are there. Our culture isn't great, but I think it's still hard to make a case that it is OPPOSED to Jesus. Disinterested, yes. Distorting, yes. Thinks it's too smart for Him, yes. Caught believing lies about Him and themselves, yes. But as a whole, I have a really really hard time saying OPPOSED.

Good news, the Bible has more to speak on to those that find themselves in this situation than any of the others we are going to talk about.

Scripture speaks to and gives more examples of people who find themselves hated, persecuted, opposed, and oppressed than people who are free and easy, and in power.

Noah, Abraham, Israelites in Egypt, Elijah, and many other prophets, the Israelites in exile, and maybe the most potent picture is the entirety of the New Testament. The best the early church got in what we read in Scripture is that it was begrudgingly tolerated by the culture around them, and at the worst ...

We are trying to think biblically about politics and culture. Biblically, what do we do with a culture who is opposed to the things of God, the way of Jesus?

So what I want to do today, is look at some big picture stuff. To be honest, if we tried to be exhaustive today, we would be here forever. Because like I said there is just so much in Scripture that speaks to this very situation.

I just want to point us to three things, seen in Scripture, that could be helpful in giving us the right perspective and enable us to live faithful to Jesus in the middle of a culture that opposes Him.

The first is this. Scripture sure seems to say don't be surprised when this happens.

1. Don't be surprised. When we know that something can happen, even will happen, we aren't floored by it, and we have a better chance of responding to it, rather than knee jerk react and freak out.

Story: Cell phone deal in Mexico

If we know something is coming, we shouldn't act surprised when it gets here.

If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I

have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you: "A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:18)

Then in chapter 16, he tells them why he is saying all this:

So they don't stumble - vs. 1

So they remember he said them - vs. 3

I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world. (John 16:33)

Travis talked about this a little bit

We have the benefit of knowing that this has happened, and will happen again, and that we have ALOT of examples of how people walked through it. Why are we so afraid of it happening?

2. Biblically, we must oppose evil, stand for truth, but in the way of the one Who says He is the truth, Jesus.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12, NIV)

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. (Romans 12:9)

But in the way of Jesus

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.

Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when He had come as a man,

He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us. (1 Peter 2:12)

Then goes on to say, and do it under the authority of people who are against you, respecting and honoring them.

To live true to what the Bible says, we have to do both of these things, especially in a culture that is opposed to the way of Jesus.

We cannot any longer settle for some people being the truth tellers, the firecrackers, the tell-it-like-it-is-ers and others being the compassion, the mercy, the grace, the care for the individual. We need to be both.

When we are not, and we have not many times, we undermine our credibility.

I see this all the time with my kids. Let me give you some examples.

Kids apologizing – says the right thing, but in the wrong way.
Judah – pretended to like seafood.

I don't believe either of them, because they are missing half the equation. I wonder if sometimes that's why people don't believe that the Gospel is good news. Because they see an inconsistent picture in us.

It seems like we have bought the lie that we can only do one or the other. I think that is one of the dumbest, but most damaging lies of the enemy.

We oppose the evil in this world, but we must oppose it in the way of Jesus, not using the same tactics and tools of the world.

We must become less (so He may increase), lay down what we feel like we are owed.

What does this take?

Humility and discernment

So in the months to come, when EVERYONE will have an opinion about EVERYTHING, let's oppose the evil in this world, stand up for what is true, but let's make sure to do it in the way Jesus did. Filled to the brim with a humble attitude, and a discerning spirit.

Ok, last thing ...

3. How do we be faithful to Jesus in the middle of a culture that opposes Him? Just get to work. (Assignments and calling)

We have talked about this before, the mission is the same regardless of context, ease, cost, or situation.

Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in Heaven and on Earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, Who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of His appearing and His Kingdom: Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for My departure is close. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There is reserved for Me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give Me on that day, and not only to Me, but to all those who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

Just two examples that seem to place a HIGH value on getting to work, the work of the Kingdom, when surrounded by opposition.

I have had the privilege to meet people who are so faithful to Jesus, many in places where it's hard to be, and something I have noticed in them that is a common thread, is they are busy. They are doing the work.

Say November goes the worst that we could possibly imagine, does your mission change? Has God's character changed? Is He all of a sudden less trustworthy than He was? I hope no one in here would answer yes to that question

What's the worst that could happen? We die, the government actually hunts us down and kills us.

Story: Vida and Jer.

If we find ourselves in a culture that favors us as Christians, great, let's use every single freedom offered to us to represent Jesus well, to be witness to His goodness. And if we find ourselves in a culture that is diametrically opposed the way of Jesus, hates us, reviles us, fine, rejoice Matthew 5 says, and get back to work. Maybe a more labor intensive, costly work, but it's the same work.

The body of Christ

Wringing their hands, it's hard to get down there and get some work done with them.

If feet are digging in on pet issues or opinions that are just that, how are they supposed to carry the Gospel to those who need to hear it?

If a mouth is full of complaints and grumbling, how can it speak the Gospel of hope and joy and peace that Jesus says it is? Such echo chambers.

Real time example: this bbq we are about to go to. We just had a dumpster fire of presidential debate last week. How easy would it be to go out there and say, man what a moron that Trump is, man Biden needs to be committed, blah blah blah. What if the body used its words for something far more productive. Connecting each other to our assignments, sharing how God has been good to us. Asking for the help we need from each other. Resting in the truth that Jesus' Kingdom is here yet still more to come.