

## Children's Moment

May 31, 2015

**Title:** Jesus Is All We Need

**Object:** [Swiss Army Knife](#)

**Scripture:** [“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory.”](#) (2 Peter 1:3)

Look at what I have this morning. How many of you have ever seen one of these? Did you know that these knives have been around for over 100 years? In the late 1800's, a knife maker in Switzerland named Karl Elsener designed a pocketknife that he called the *Soldier's Knife*. He sold it to the Swiss Army in October 1891 and soon they were being sold not only in Switzerland, but around the world. They became even more famous in the 1940's when they were shipped to the United States to be sold on U.S. Army bases. In fact it was American soldiers who gave them the name by which they are known today, the "Swiss Army Knife."

The purpose of these little knives was to give the soldiers an all-in-one tool, which would meet their every need. It has a can opener, a screwdriver, scissors, and of course, a knife. There is a tool there to do just about anything you might need to do. There are a lot of cheap imitations of the Swiss Army knife, but the real thing is still made in Switzerland. It is one of the finest pocketknives available, and is backed by a lifetime guarantee.

The Swiss Army knife reminds me of Jesus. Every day we face many difficult situations. The Bible tells us that Jesus will meet every need that we have in life. It doesn't matter what situation we may face, Jesus is the answer. There are a lot of cheap imitations out there that claim to have the answer to our problems, but the

real thing is Jesus, and He comes with an everlasting life guarantee! He is the only one that can make that promise!

Don't accept a cheap imitation. Choose Jesus. He is the only one who can meet your every need!

Dear Jesus, may each of us choose you to be our "all in all" and to accept your everlasting life guarantee. Amen.

John 15:17-25

## Hated

### Foundation of Hatred

Jesus tells the disciples that His followers must love one another because the world hates them. Jesus lays the foundation for what He will now instruct His disciples by saying, **“These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”** (John 15:17) Jesus then expands on why this is necessary. After His explanation He ends this passage with saying that the world hates Him and His followers in order **“to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, ‘They hated Me without cause.’”** In verse 25, this closing verse, Jesus is saying this is written of in the Old Testament and He came to fulfill the Old and bring the New. In Psalms 69:4 it is written, **“More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause.”** The world did not just hate Jesus at the time He walked this earth or when He was crucified, but it has hated Him throughout the ages, primarily because Jesus convicts the world of its sin before a holy God. If we are to believe the scriptures and I say we are - then what is Jesus telling us, nay, commanding us as His followers?

To lay the foundation for answering this question we must first look at what is our attitude towards not just what Jesus commands but to the whole of scripture. When the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy he gave instructions as to how we should look at the whole of scripture. Turn in your bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 3, I will begin reading at verse 14, **“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for**

salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:14-17) Believing and living the whole of the scriptures is essential to being a Christian. We do not get to pick and choose what we want from the scriptures, but we are to embrace the truth of it all.

Jesus says very simply and clearly in John 15 beginning in verse **18**, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. **19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” How true is this statement? To answer this question I would like to look to history - for history verifies the truth of Jesus teachings and the whole of the scriptures.

### **History of Hatred**

The Church of Jesus Christ consists of the followers of Jesus, it is not a building, but the Church is a living entity. The Church was birthed on the day of Pentecost and has lived until this day and will continue to live until Christ returns. History demonstrates that the Church of Christ has thrived and grown in the face of continued opposition and hatred. The Book of Acts records the history of the early church. Acts gives an historical overview of the early church and its struggles. In chapter three we see that Peter and John radically healed the man crippled from birth and Peter preached powerfully of Jesus the Christ. We read of the response to Peter and John at the beginning of chapter four of Acts, “... the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, **2** greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. **3** And they arrested them ...”

(Acts 4:1-3) The Jewish leadership did indeed hate Jesus and His small band of followers, but they were not worried for they believed this following would soon die since they had killed Jesus. The Jews jailed and abused the apostles and Jesus' followers because of their hatred of Jesus, but this did not slow the growth or destroy the Church. To the contrary the Church exploded. The high priest was jealous of this extraordinary growth, he feared this sudden threat and was fueled by his hatred of Jesus. We know this by what is written in Acts 5, "The high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy **18** they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison." (Acts 5:17-18) The apostles and new church cared little for what the Jewish leaders thought or threaten. They preached the gospel boldly. In Acts 6, Stephen preached the gospel and was falsely accused, arrested, tried and stoned to death. Again, the Jewish leadership thought this would stop this movement. The Pharisee named Saul held the cloaks of those who killed Stephen and saw an opportunity for political and career advancement. He persecuted these believers in Jesus as the Messiah with vigor. Stephen became the first of millions that would be martyred for their faith in Christ.

The first of the apostles to be martyred was James, the brother of John. James was arrested and killed by king Herod, this as recorded in chapter 12 of Acts. Soon afterwards Herod arrested and imprisoned Peter, but an angel of God freed Peter. Tradition and history records that the persecution continued with the apostles being martyred for their faith and their continual preaching of the gospel. The one exception was John who was exiled to the island of Patmos (**pat·mos**). Would men swear to the truth of Christ and His gospel message, be abused, tortured and put to death for what the Jews claimed was a lie? This defies logic on many levels and is a testimony to the power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now comes the focused and fervent persecution by Saul the ambitious Pharisee. He hunted down, arrested, imprisoned and executed followers of “the Way”, both men and women. But, the Church grew and the Lord dealt with Saul! From early in the life of the Church God used persecution to energize and purify the Church, and grow it into a powerful force. As Saul is working to destroy the new Church, God meets him on the road to Damascus changing Saul into Paul who had just as much zeal for preaching the gospel as he had for hunting Christians. His fearless preaching enraged the Jewish leadership and they hated him and they sought to kill him. Paul no longer belonged to the world but to God. As Jesus fulfilled His mission from God the Father, so now, Paul fulfills his mission given by Jesus. Paul fulfilled what Jesus spoke beginning in verse 20, “Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. **21** But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. **22** If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. **23** Whoever hates me hates my Father also.” The world hates Christ and so it hates Paul and all followers of Christ. The Book of Acts records the ministry of Paul. He fled Damascus being lowered from the wall in a basket in chapter 9. Because of Paul’s preaching the gospel he was forced to flee Iconium (**ee·kon·ee·on**) and he was pelted with stones and left for dead in Lystra (**loos·trah**) in chapter 14. Chapter 16 records that Paul was thrown into jail at Philippi. After his release he travels to Thessalonica and his preaching sparks a riot so he flees to Berea (**ber·oy·ah**), which he also has to flee because the Jews from Thessalonica (**thes·sal·on·ee·kay**) followed him. Paul arrives in Athens by chapter 17 only to be mocked by Greek philosophers. He is brought before the Roman proconsul in Corinth (**kor·in·thos**) and is abused by both Jews and Gentiles. He travels to Ephesus (**ef·es·os**) in order to sail from Greece to Syria

(soo·ree·ah) and there a Jewish plot sought to have him killed and this changes his plans. He now is his way to Jerusalem and he meets with the leaders of the church in Ephesus (ef·es·os) at Miletus (mil·ay·tos). Paul tells them “I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, **23** except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. **24** But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:22-24) Paul was committed to fulfill his calling. What about you? Are you living to fulfill your calling from God?

In Acts chapter 21 we read that while in Jerusalem Paul is recognized in the temple and savagely beaten and only a squad of Roman soldiers showing up on the scene and arresting him saved his life. While in custody of the Romans the Jews launch another plot to kill him. The Roman governor sends Paul under heavy guard to Caesarea (kahee·sar·i·a).

Acts 27 and 28 finds Paul sailing for Rome and arriving only after a distressing voyage and shipwreck. In Rome the Jewish leaders seek his destruction at the hands of the Romans. The Romans release him for a period of about 2 years. Emperor Nero ('nē·rō) rearrests Paul and has him executed.

Prior to Paul’s conversion he and the Jewish leaders considered people of “the Way” or “Christians” to be heretics. Thus believing by persecuting Christians they were serving God. Pharisees and Sadducees feared Christian loyalty to Jesus, they worried it would bring the wrath of Rome and that would threaten their positions of power. Does this have any similarities to the political landscape of today in the world?

The Romans persecuted the Christians for several reasons. In the beginning they

viewed Christianity as just a Jewish sect and since the Romans tolerated Judaism – they left the Christians alone. This is why when the Jews in Corinth (**kor·in·thos**) accused Paul before the Roman proconsul in Acts 18 he refused to intervene for he felt it was an internal Jewish matter. Gradually as the Jewish persecution of Christians became more violent and as Gentiles began to join this Christian sect the Romans saw that Christianity was distinct from Judaism. Being separate from Judaism caused Rome to declare Christianity as illegal. Christian loyalty to Christ above Caesar and Rome's many gods created suspicions and they were deemed a threat to the empire. Refusing to worship the emperor constituted treason against the state of Rome. These are just some of things that lead Christians in Rome to begin meeting at night and in secret as Roman persecution grew.

Another major reason Rome persecuted Christians is the leaders of Rome feared the influence Christianity was having on the lower classes. There had been slave revolts and they feared Christianity would bring more and this was a threat to their positions of power. Do we see any shadows of this today? In Africa, Asia and the Middle East? What about in America?

Of course in any society money plays a factor in control and fear. Remember Paul exorcised the demon from the fortune-telling slave girl in Philippi and this caused her masters to lose money in Acts chapter 16. Money was a factor in the riots in Ephesus in Acts 19. By the early second century Pliny (**'pli-nē**), the Roman governor of Bithynia, (**bə-'thi-nē-ə**), the Roman province in the northwest part of Asia Minor, expressed his concern in a letter to Emperor Trajan (**'trā-jən**) that the spread of Christianity had caused the pagan temples to become deserted, the sale of animals for sacrificing had plummeted and that this had caused plagues, famine and financial problems. Pliny wanted the emperor to hold the Christians responsible. At about the same time the



Christian leader Tertullian (tər-'təl-yən) of Carthage ('kär-thij) in the Roman province of Africa wrote of the absurdity of what Christians were being accused of saying with rye wit, "If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky doesn't move or the earth does, if there is famine, if there is plague, the cry is at once 'Christians to the lion.' What, all of them to one lion?" Christians were misunderstood and therefore feared and hated. This caused their persecution by the Jewish leaders, the Roman Empire, and businessmen.

The first official persecution of Christians in Rome was lead by Emperor Nero ('nē-rō). In 64 AD fire swept through Rome destroying much of the city. The people began to blame Nero - so he quickly sought a scapegoat. He found one in the Christians who were not trusted because of their different lifestyles and beliefs. Christians were arrested, tortured, thrown to wild animals, crucified and covered with pitch to be used as human torches to light Nero's gardens at night. According to tradition both the Apostles Peter and Paul died during Nero's reign of persecution. Persecution of Christians, over time, spread beyond Rome to throughout the empire.

Emperor Decius ('dē-sh ē-əs) began the first empire-wide persecution of the Church in AD 250. Severe economic crisis and external pressures of the barbarian's attacks on the northern borders were challenging Rome's ability to function. Decius ('dē-sh ē-əs) was convinced that Rome's neglect of its ancient gods was the reason for its suffering. The emperor ordered everyone to make a sacrifice to the emperor and to the gods and obtain certificate to prove they had done so. Failure to make these sacrifices and obtain a certificate was punishable by death. Christians stood their ground and refused – many being martyred. Praise God Decius died in 251 and the edict ended. History shows that the known world at that time and current events shows the world today continues to hate God. As Jesus said 2000 years ago and recorded in John 15

beginning in verse 23, “Whoever hates me hates my Father also. **24** If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. **25** But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’”

At the beginning of the fourth century emperor Diocletian (dī-ə-ˈklē-shən) began the most violent persecution of Christians. He wanted to exterminate all Christians from the Roman Empire. Churches were destroyed, bibles burned and Christians killed. The terror lasted almost 10 years until Constantine (ˈkän t-stən-, tēn, -, tīn) and Licinius (lə-ˈsi-nē-əs) became co-emperors. Persecution slowed but did not end until Constantine became the sole emperor in AD 324. Roman persecution of Christians ended after over 200 hundred years. During this time the Church grew beyond what anyone, even the great church planter the Apostle Paul, could have imagined.

Over time the Catholic Church replaced Imperial Rome as the dominant power in Europe during the Middle Ages. Persecution began against true believers who challenged the “Church”. History records the horrors of the Inquisition and St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre. Everywhere the Church became institutionalized religion run by man there was persecution of others.

In more recent times there has been the persecution of Christians by Communists and Islamic regimes, and various dictators. It has been estimated by religious historians that approximately 70 million Christians have been martyred since the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ.

### **Contemporary Hatred**

In our enlighten modern times it is astonishing that 2/3s of these Christians or about

23 million have been martyred since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is estimated that since 1990, because of more accurate information, that there are about 100,000 Christians martyred every year. Christians outside of Western Nations pay a steep price for their faith in Jesus. Maybe “Christians” in America are safe because the cost of following Christ in America is cheap, the Church has become lazy, ineffective and many have chosen to preach, teach and live just small portions of the Word of God found in the Bible. The American church is of little threat to Satan. Does this beg the question that for the good of the American Church, for its need to come alive in living the scriptures - it needs to be persecuted? Why should we expect that we will not be hated for the name of Jesus? We should expect persecution if we are standing strong for Christ, preaching and living the Word of God. Look at the history of the rise and fall of nations – Israel, Greece, Rome, Great Britain, Russia and many others - should we expect that America will be any different? America has lost its focus on the One who gave it life. How can God show mercy and favor to a nation who kills its own children, a nation that no longer holds the gift of life sacred and a nation that defies the precepts of God at every turn?

In John chapter 15 up to our study passage this morning Jesus had been giving comfort to the disciples, assuring them of the future, a future with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Now Jesus tells them to secure this future they will have to deal with persecution and possibly give their lives for their faith in Him. Christians are hated because they are not of this world and are enemies of the Prince of this world. Christians are hated because they have been set apart from the rebellion of this world and are to live holy. The world hates anyone who makes the world examine itself or think deeply about who people are and why we exist. This is why since the creation of the Christian Church believers have had a desperate need for each other and life lived

in community. Yet, in American we have this ideal of being self-made and self-sufficient. This concept is illusive, but it does keep our focus off of why we were created, why we exist and what is the purpose of life. To keep our focus from these important questions society promotes theories and pseudo-science to show any answer but the true answer - God. So here we are “Christians”, those God has called to live holy and set apart from this self-absorbed world. We simply cannot succeed on our own – we need community. This is why Jesus says just prior to His teaching on persecution, in verse 17, “These things I command you, so that you will love one another.” This is a strong statement; it is a command from our Lord. As a command we should take this as an important directive for living our lives. Jesus wanted to emphasize its importance – this command, “that you will love one another.” In its various forms, “that you will love one another,” is written 21 times in 11 books of the New Testament, cited by John, Paul, Peter and the author of Hebrews and 3 times it is directly in form of a command.

## **Conclusion**

The question this poses is this; will we live as Jesus has commanded us? Will we actively work to love one another? This means setting aside our own needs, at times, to place the needs of others first. It means, as saved sinners, we need to actively work at apologizing when we fail and hurt others, we need to shelve our pride and reconcile with brothers and sisters and we need to work at forgiving others. This is who we are to be as individuals and as a community and the closer we come to this command given by Christ the better equipped we are to live in a fallen world, deal with persecution and thrive for the kingdom. It also becomes a powerful witness to the lost. This is our prime object given by our Lord –

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31)

What say you? Are we committed to live together as our Lord has commanded? What is your response?