

Text: John 15:18–27

Title: The Evidence of Jesus' Love / translated by : Eunji Choi

1. Jesus Who Calls Me His Friend

My childhood home was right next to a church, so I started attending church naturally, even before I began elementary school. Of course, the proximity helped, but what really drew me in was my eldest sister. Among the five siblings in our family, she was the first to start going to church, and she would take the rest of us along with her. I began going to church at such a young age that I don't even remember my first visit. My sister, however, began her walk of faith under heavy opposition from our father, who was not a believer. I still remember hearing him say things like, "She's lost her mind over Jesus." As a child, I often wondered, *what does it mean to be crazy about Jesus?* Not long after I entered university, I began receiving the same kind of judgment from my father. He would say things like, "That boy is worse than a communist. He's brainwashed by Jesus." He clearly disapproved. But all I wanted was to know Jesus, to follow Him because I loved Him. And yet, that desire was met with suspicion and ridicule.

When I first encountered Jesus in a personal way, what moved me most deeply was that He called me His *friend*. That meant everything to me. You see, I didn't have many friends growing up—none, in fact, that I still keep in touch with from my school days. The children in my rural hometown were rough, and the hierarchy between older and younger students was stricter than the military. It was common to be dragged behind the school building during breaks and beaten by upperclassmen. I hated that culture. In church, I had been taught that losing a fight was, in fact, winning in God's eyes. So, I avoided fights. As a result, I probably came across as boring to the other kids. I didn't play rough, I wasn't athletic, and I was seen as overly religious. Because of that, I was often left out. But I didn't really mind. Maybe my "holy" image even protected me, because the older kids usually left me out of the beatings. Looking back now, I wonder if I had actually isolated myself from everyone. I stayed on the surface with my classmates and felt fine being alone. But when I met Jesus—and when He called me *friend*—that word pierced my heart. I realized then: *Believing in Jesus means becoming His friend. Sharing the gospel means becoming someone's friend.* That idea took deep root in my heart.

To me, Jesus came as the friend I never had, and His friendship became my greatest strength. From that moment on, I decided: I want to be a person who's "crazy" about Jesus. If being called "crazy for Jesus" by my father was the cost, then I was happy to pay it.

2. When You Love, His Commandments Become Light

Because I didn't have many friends growing up, I don't have many memories of making sacrifices for someone else. But after I welcomed Jesus as my friend, I found that giving my life for a friend no longer felt like a loss. Why do we often find following Jesus to be so burdensome or difficult? Why is it that we say we *love* Jesus, but still feel like actually following in His footsteps is too much? Why do we think it's enough to just attend Sunday services and keep up basic relationships at church—while things like "*take up your cross*" or "*offer your life as a gift*" feel overwhelming or even off-putting?

I believe it's because the love of Jesus hasn't yet reached us deeply enough. When we are truly moved by the depth of the love we've received, our hearts respond accordingly. The reason Jesus' command—His *new commandment* to "love one another"—feels heavy to us is because we often obey it out of obligation, not out of love. But when the truth that the Lord *chose us, called us, and made us His friends* truly sinks in—when that reality strikes us with awe and gratitude—everything begins to change. Those who are deeply connected to the love of God, and have personally experienced it, find that Jesus' commandments are no longer a burden. The reason someone can lay down their life for a friend is simply because they love that friend. Commands in themselves can feel demanding, even exhausting—but love changes everything. When we love someone, the hard things no longer feel hard. We obey joyfully, not begrudgingly. Love makes all the difference. The deeper our trust and love grow toward Jesus—our true Friend—the lighter His commandments feel.

In Philippians 1:9–11, Paul prays this beautiful prayer for the believers in Philippi:

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."

When love abounds, we begin to understand the path of Christ more clearly. As our love for the Lord deepens, courage rises up in us to follow Him. Paul's prayer holds this beautiful truth: when we walk in Jesus' way, the fruit of righteousness will naturally follow.

3. To Hate Jesus Is to Deny the Power of Love

In today's passage, Jesus gives us a very uncomfortable truth: If you love Me, the world will hate you. And it doesn't stop there. In verse 20, He even says that His followers will be persecuted. This is serious. Many of us want to believe in Jesus just enough to receive blessings—but the idea that following Him means facing hatred and persecution from the world? That feels like too high a price. But here's something I find puzzling. It's been over 2,000 years since Jesus died and rose again, and when we look at the world today, it doesn't *seem* like people hate Jesus. After all, around 2.5 billion people worldwide identify as Christians and sing praises to Jesus. Even among the two billion Muslims, Jesus is respected as a great prophet. He is also honored in certain forms of Buddhism. So if the majority of the world appears to admire Jesus, why did Jesus say the world hates Him?

Jesus answers this Himself: *The world hates Me because it hates the One who sent Me—God the Father.*

Through His command to "love one another," Jesus revealed the very heart of the Father. The failure of Old Testament Israel wasn't just about breaking religious rules—it was their failure to become the kind of loving, united community that God had intended. Israel had been called to be a model society, a visible testimony of what it looked like to live by God's love—a blessing to all nations. But they neither understood nor practiced this command. Last week's Old Testament lectionary reading from Amos 8:4–6 powerfully exposed this failure:

“Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, ‘When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?’—skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.”

The prophet Amos condemns those who manipulate and deceive others for personal gain—even exploiting the poor to satisfy their greed. He rebukes them for their moral darkness. A community that was meant to bear fruit through love had become corrupted by self-centered desire. When we are consumed by desire, we become blind to the hunger of those around us. We don’t see our neighbors as people to love, but as tools to fulfill our own cravings. This inward-curved life, driven by selfish ambition, is what Scripture calls sin—the opposite of love. To be a disciple of Jesus is to make a clear decision: I will not follow the path of desire. I will follow the path of love. To hate Jesus, then, is to reject the very principle by which He says the world was meant to operate—love. If we believe that power, success, competition, and conflict are what truly drive the world—and that love is weak or unrealistic—then we are, in essence, rejecting Jesus. That is what it means for the world to hate Him. To hate Jesus is to deny that love is the strongest force in the universe. It’s to believe that desire, not love, should rule our lives. That’s the defining mark of a life that stands in opposition to Christ.

4. The Cost of Discipleship

What does it really mean to believe in Jesus—more than that, to become His disciple? It means aligning my path with His path. It means embracing His destiny as my own. To be a disciple of Jesus is to accept His story as part of my story and to live in such a way that His story is completed through my life. To love Jesus means I choose the way of the cross: I crucify my flesh and desires so that others might live. I believe that *this* kind of life is not only right but beautiful. So what does it mean when people hate Jesus? It means they reject that way of living. It means they choose selfish ambition over self-sacrificial love. They don’t care what happens to others. They think things like brotherly love, community, and mutual responsibility are meaningless. For them, the only thing that matters is fulfilling their own desires. That mindset is, in essence, hatred toward Jesus—because it stands in direct opposition to everything He lived and taught. When we choose to live rightly, it’s almost inevitable that we’ll be misunderstood, criticized, or even hated. We hear things like: *“So you think you’re better than everyone else?” “Lighten up! You don’t have to be so righteous all the time.”* To live in the world means, in a sense, we live among those who hate Jesus. Because the world doesn’t just dislike Jesus’ ways—it *hates* them. The world cannot tolerate kindness toward enemies. It rejects mercy toward opponents. Even the slightest gesture of grace toward an adversary can provoke violent resistance.

Consider the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, brokered by U.S. President Bill Clinton. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, came together in a historic agreement, recognizing one another and seeking peace. But this act of reconciliation sparked outrage—especially among religious extremists in Israel. Rabin was ultimately assassinated by a right-wing Israeli youth. Opposition to Arafat also escalated, leading to the rise of Hamas, a radical anti-Israel group. Even Mahatma Gandhi, who preached nonviolence and forgiveness, was assassinated by a fellow Hindu. Why? Because he extended love and compassion to his

enemies. The world despises the kind of love that doesn't seek its own gain. It rejects the idea that we could share in one another's pain, or carry one another's burdens. Jesus said: *"Your sorrow will become My sorrow. Your sins—I will take them as My own. Your cross—I will carry it for you."* But the world doesn't love this kind of love. And that's why it hates Jesus—and anyone who dares to follow Him in that same radical, self-emptying love.

5. When the Holy Spirit Comes...

If the life of a friend and disciple of Jesus ends with only hatred and persecution, what a miserable life it would be. But in verses 26–27, Jesus tells us—that's *not* the end of the story. Something changes when the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, comes. The Holy Spirit reveals to us that the way of Jesus is not a road to ruin. That the cross was not a failure—but the greatest victory. As Jesus faced His death on the cross, He would experience what felt like complete abandonment by the Father. On the cross, Jesus cried out: *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"* The cross, in human terms, looked like the collapse of His relationship with God. It seemed like God had turned away. But Jesus promised that when the Spirit of Truth comes, we would understand something deeper: The cross wasn't the breaking of God's covenant—but the ultimate fulfillment of it. It happened *because* the covenant was unbreakable. The Holy Spirit reveals that what looked like failure was, in fact, triumph. What felt like abandonment was actually the moment of deepest union with the Father. The Spirit of Truth is the One who binds us—personally and powerfully—to God. He is the link that connects us to God's heart.

So when we choose to live by truth, to follow Jesus, and to love Him deeply, we will inevitably suffer. We may be hated. We may be rejected. But in those very moments, the Holy Spirit draws us even closer to God. Jesus Himself experienced this covenantal union through the cross. And when we face rejection—maybe at work, in our families, or among friends—not because we did wrong, but because we follow Jesus, we begin to experience something strange and powerful: A deeper love for God, a greater conviction to stay the course, and an inner flame that cannot be extinguished. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. He binds every obedient disciple into the covenant love of God and forms the foundation of true Christian community. We see this clearly in the book of Acts. After the Spirit came, Jesus' disciples were transformed. They became bold, fearless, and full of love. The Holy Spirit is like divine glue—bonding us tightly to God. And when we are deeply connected to God in covenant, no trial can destroy us. We rise again. We walk again. We follow Jesus again. Never forget this: *Truth is not just about facts*. Truth is covenantal connection. When the Spirit of Truth comes, He gives us the courage and confidence to walk the way of Jesus—no matter the cost.

6. Show Your Love for Jesus Through Your Life

You can say you love Jesus—and even feel it emotionally. But don't forget: it's entirely possible to confess your love for Jesus with your lips, yet still live in a way that denies Him. Many people in the world would say, "I don't hate Jesus." They might even say, "Jesus was a good man." Billions around the world sing praises to Jesus and admire Him. But how many truly *follow* Him? How many say, "His destiny is my destiny, His path is my path"? Not many—because that path is narrow, unpopular, and often misunderstood. It feels like the kind of life that leads to loss, not

success. It can even make you look foolish in the eyes of the world. Those who walk the path of what is *right* often won't be praised for it. The world tries to lure us with the saying: "Just let things be. Go with the flow. Keep the peace." But let me tell you this: *What is good is not always right. But what is right is always good.* The path of Jesus breaks down the wall between the sacred and the secular. It tears down systems of exclusion and hate and builds bridges of communication and grace. Religious leaders of Jesus' day hated Him precisely because He blurred those boundaries. They couldn't stand His way of life. So we must not reduce our love for Jesus to an emotional feeling. Our love must shape our values, our will, our spending, and our actions. A love for Jesus that stays in your mouth and never moves your life doesn't even weigh a gram. Real love is weighty. Real love shows up in how you live. Let's talk for a moment about *how* we spend our money. The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon once said: "*If your wallet hasn't repented, then you haven't truly repented.*" You cannot serve both God and money, as Jesus clearly said. And the only way to disarm the power money has over us is to use it God's way— To make sure some part of our budget reflects our love for Jesus.

Let me share a personal story. My father, who passed away just last month, came to believe in Jesus more than 20 years *after* I did. He made a decision to follow Christ around the time I left for China as a student missionary. We later moved to the United States, and one day my mother told me something that left a deep impression on me. Back in our hometown in Korea, the church was raising funds for a major remodeling project. It would cost more than ₩10 million (about \$10,000 USD). The pastor asked the congregation for help. My father, feeling convicted, took ₩10 million that he had hidden away—and donated it all for the church. When I heard this, I knew it in my heart: "My father *really* loves Jesus." It wasn't the act of giving that moved me. It was the heart behind it—a heart that had disarmed money's power and expressed deep love for Christ. This was the same father who once called me "*crazy for Jesus*". But in the end, it seemed like he had become even "*crazier*" for Jesus than I was. I share this not to glorify my father, but to show you that love for Jesus must be more than talk. It must be visible in our choices, sacrifices, and commitments. So yes—love Jesus.

And if you want to stick close to Him, you will absolutely need the help of the Holy Spirit. Only by the power of the Spirit can we find the strength and courage to walk the path of Jesus— Even when it leads through suffering, rejection, or pain. Love Jesus. Show the evidence of that love through your life. And may Jesus be revealed to the world through you.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever experienced financial loss or personal suffering because you tried to live out your faith in Jesus? If you have experienced persecution or suffering because you love Jesus, please share your story.
2. Even though you want to love Jesus and live according to His ways, why does it not seem to go well? How can this be resolved?