

***The Opposite of Hate***

*Psalm 146, 149; Nehemiah 8<sup>9-end</sup>; John 16<sup>1-11</sup>*

*The joy of the Lord is your strength.  
[Nehemiah 8<sup>10</sup>]*

The opposite of hate - indifference; just the same as the opposite of love. Indifference is the absence of feeling and love and hate are the positive and negative expression of feeling!

Why on earth would people hate Christians - it is because we are different!

- ✠ Nehemiah shows one aspect of this - we are obedient to God, however ridiculous that makes us appear.

As part of the physical and spiritual rebuilding of the nation once the exiles returned to Jerusalem they learn to rejoice in the **joy of the Lord** rather than live in misery (sometime a real challenge for us to). Then they read the Law and apply it. SO they build booths and live on their roofs and in their courtyards for 8 days to celebrate harvest.

We are distinctive because we read what God says and we do it and we don't care what others think about it!

- ✠ Jesus shows another aspect of this - we respond to a spirit to try and build something that was started 2000 years ago and that is hardly sane or fashionable.

It is the old truism that teaches us that religious is dangerous and the faith is powerful. It is courageous to choose to respond to the Advocate rather than be confined within rules, because that opens up all the possibilities of faith.

When asked by a workman this week, 'who said that you should be a vicar?' I said, 'God.' The discussion was interesting because I had responded to something so intangible and undefined.

We are indifferent to those who hate us - the only proper response - because we take God seriously in word and spirit.