

Jesus Brings Us to The Father
John 13.36-14.14, also 14.23 and 17.1-11
March 6, 2022

Have you ever just wanted to sit at the feet of Jesus? Have you ever just wanted to be in a room with Him even for a few minutes so that you could hear Him speak to you? For the next couple of weeks, we have the chance to do that.

John chapters 13 through 17 record the words Jesus shared with the disciples in the hours before His arrest. These are the most important words Jesus wanted His disciples to hear at this moment in his ministry. We could approach this in a couple of ways.

We could approach this like I used to do when I was starting out in ministry. We could dive into these words and parse out the mystery of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We could gaze at the wonder of Jesus being fully God and fully human, delighting in what the Greek word *monogenes* actually means and points us to.

We could plumb the depths of the profound theological mysteries that are embedded in these words, or we could receive them as they were intended. The disciples were troubled by many things. We are troubled by many things. As it was then, it is so today. Let's join the disciples and just sit before Jesus and allow His words to speak to us in this moment.

We will look at John 14:1-23 but in order to focus on a single topic we will save what He said about the Holy Spirit until next week. Today, we listen to How Jesus brings us to the Father. Next week we will see how Jesus brings the Father to us.

Before we read, we need to set the context a bit.

Jesus and the disciples knew how dangerous this time was. Even before He raised Lazarus from the dead some leaders wanted Jesus dead. But after Lazarus was raised, that desire increased as the religious leaders got together and solidified their intent.

They were concerned that Jesus would use His rising influence to lead a revolt against the Romans which would not be successful and would only result in their nation's destruction. They concluded it was better that one person (Jesus) would die so that the entire nation would survive.

The leaders wanted to be told when Jesus set foot in Jerusalem so they could arrest Him. As the Passover drew near everyone was looking for Jesus. They said to one another, "What do you think? Isn't He coming to the feast at all?" (John 11:56)

Jesus arrived in Bethany, was anointed with expensive perfume in preparation for His burial and then rode into Jerusalem on the back of a young donkey as a jubilant crowd waved palm branches and announced Him as the rightful king of Israel!

After five days of debate and teaching in the temple courts we come to the last night with His disciples. Jesus washed their feet, announced that one of them would betray Him, hosted the Seder meal, instituted the Last Supper (what we call communion or Eucharist), and then spoke these words.

³³ Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going....

³⁶ Simon Peter asked, "Lord, where are you going?"

And Jesus replied, "You can't go with me now, but you will follow me later."

³⁷ "But why can't I come now, Lord?" he asked. "I'm ready to die for you."

³⁸ Jesus answered, "Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter—before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.

Do you feel the tension and sadness in the air? Can you feel the discomfort as the disciples wonder what is taking place and what will take place? It sounds like Jesus is a father speaking to his children while on his deathbed!

With this in mind, join me now in sitting at the feet of Jesus.

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

From their perspective, nothing could be worse than their teacher's departure. They had just spent three years with Him. They had experienced firsthand His grace, truth, love and power. All their eggs were in His basket. If He leaves and goes someplace that they can't follow, what does that mean for all they invested, all they hoped for?

The heart was understood to be the seat of a person's will and emotions and they believed God's truth could impact how they felt. So, like the psalmist in Psalm 42 they can ask themselves, "Why are you so downcast? Why are you so disturbed? Put your hope in God" (Psalm 42:5). God's truth carried more weight than their current circumstances.

Jesus said, "Don't let your heart be troubled. Yes, you hear and will see many things that are troubling, but there is a reason you can choose peace. There is a reason that you do not need to be afraid. My absence will not be permanent. I leave for a reason and when I return, we will never be apart again."

To believe in God is to trust in God. It is a personal, relational trust that the one you know will fulfill what He has promised. Jesus continued..."I know you trust in God, and that is good. Now, I need you to trust also in me."

Did you catch that Jesus equates trusting in Him as the same as trusting in God? If it is not true, this is blasphemy...but this is true and so it is a teaching to embrace. Put your trust in Christ. He will fulfill what He promised.

There has been a lot of talk about what the Father's house is. Let me tell you what it is not—the Father's house is not a series of opulent mansions. This idea slipped in through the Latin Vulgate translation. The Father's house could refer to the temple here, but I think there is something far more familiar and familial that Jesus had in mind.

Jesus spoke these words right after the communion meal where they talked about love and fidelity and made a new covenant with a cup of wine that symbolized Christ's blood. It was very familiar to them because this was the same kind of commitment that a groom would make when he proposed to his bride.

This image of Jesus as a groom has already been used several times in the gospels and the disciples knew that the image of God being wed to Israel was a common word-picture in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31 as just one example).

They knew that when a man proposed to his bride, he would then leave the bride to return to his father's house to build on an addition which would become their new home. Once the place was ready, he would return to get his bride, take her back to the new home where they would live together in his father's house. Over time the father's estate would grow into a large compound centered around a common courtyard. It was called an insula and it was the father's house that contained his entire family.

The main point here is that Jesus will not abandon them, He will not leave them for long and there is plenty of room in the Father's house. As the Son of the Father, Jesus establishes His followers as members of the Father's household and makes the Father's home accessible to them as their permanent residence. He is leaving now to get things ready for them.

You can choose not to be troubled because no matter what the circumstances might suggest, no one can take away your position as a family member in the Father's household.

I think it is interesting to note that Jesus said he was preparing a place for them. The Jewish leaders were fearful that the Romans would take their place from them (11:48). But Jesus' disciples have no such concern.

The same is true for us, isn't it? It could be anything. An invading army, a massive flood, a powerful tornado, a catastrophic financial collapse, a terrible disease that sends you to ICU and rehab, robbing you of your health and draining you of your resources, so many things could steal everything from us. But nothing can take away our place in the Father's household. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. Jesus continued.

⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

Jesus is the only way to the Father. He is the truth who reveals what we cannot learn on our own. And He is the life, the true life that cannot be snuffed out. These three words are intimately connected.

Psalm 86:11, “Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth.” Psalm 16:11, “You have made known to me the path of life.” Jesus is not a way or a truth or a life. He is the only way to the Father, the only truth that is certain and the only life that is secure. As Peter said to the Jewish leaders in Acts 4, “Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to us by which we must be saved.”

This is a hard teaching and there are three primary responses. One can accept Jesus’ claim, reject Him as crazy or say that someone else put these words in His mouth. That final response holds no weight because it has no historical grounding and does not fit the testimony of the scriptures. In the end, it is just a way to skirt around the need to make the hard choice required by Jesus’ words.

While this claim sounds exclusive, it technically doesn’t fit that definition. To be exclusive Jesus would need to exclude or shut out some from being able to access what He offers. But His path is open to all who will come to Him. There are no preconditions and no need to do something first.

All it requires is for a person to believe that Jesus has a better understanding of the spiritual world and God’s design than we do, that He is from above and we are from below, that He speaks what He knows and backs it up by what He does and that He validates it all by His resurrection from the dead. While Jesus is human, He is also divine. His words can be trusted, because of who He is. Let’s go back to the text, verse 7.

⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

⁹ Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹ Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.”ⁱ

Jesus adds that those who have seen Him have also seen the Father. We could also say it this way. Jesus' presence and God's presence is the same thing. Let's press this point a little more and say Jesus' glory and God's glory, are the same thing.

Moses was given a limited vision of God's glory and Isaiah was allowed to see the Lord seated on His throne (Ex 33:18; Is 6:1). But in Isaiah 40:5 God tells us that in the day of Messiah the glory of the LORD will be revealed and all humankind shall see it (Heb 1:3).

The disciples, and all who follow Christ, get to experience what so many have longed to know—a firsthand relationship with Almighty God. Jesus and the Father are in perfect union, so Jesus spoke the Father's words and did the Father's works because He and the Father are one.ⁱⁱ

We expect this. What we don't expect is what Jesus says next. Verse 12

¹² "I tell you the truth, [this is amen, amen, truly, truly, listen up!], anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater worksⁱⁱⁱ, because I am going to be with the Father. ¹³ You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

We will do the same work, even greater works, than Jesus. And when we speak in His name, we are speaking with His words and expressing His desire and He will act. As His disciples we are expected to do what Jesus was doing, which was doing the Father's work, speaking the Father's words, fulfilling the Father's will—not my will but thine be done.

He will do whatever we ask in His name. I think we all know that this is more than just concluding a prayer with, "In Jesus' name, amen." To ask in His name is to be his authorized representatives, so unified with His purpose that we act in his place, seek His glory and accurately speak His message.

Paul said the same thing in this way. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors [His authorized representatives who act and work on His behalf] as through God were making His appeal through us [speaking His words]. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20).

Jesus did the Father's work and spoke the Father's words; we are to do the Father's work and speak the Father's words. But it doesn't end here. I'd like us to look also at verse 23.

All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.

There is a lot here, but it is the statement about us becoming God's home that helps us today because it circles us back around to where we began.

Don't let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, that is good. Trust also in Jesus. For only by your trust in Him do you become part of God's household and so live in God's presence and with His family forever.

Jesus and the Father are one. Jesus spoke the Father's words; Jesus did the father's works. If you know Jesus, you know the Father.

In a similar way we can say that Jesus and His disciples are one. They speak His words and do His works. And as we speak His words and do His work, we find ourselves obeying Jesus. But our obedience is not a willful obedience where we will ourselves to do it and fear that we won't do it right or that God will cut us off if we don't do enough.

No, this is a willing surrender to the love that has pursued and changed us. And somewhere in the midst of it all we recognize that we don't have to wait for some future moment when we can move into the Father's house because the Father and the Son have already moved into us and no one can take that away from you.

Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Jesus. He is the only one who brings us to the Father.

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, we don't have to guess what you are like, for you have revealed your loving character to us in more than just words. And we don't have to guess if we have done enough to please you or retain our place in your household. Based on the perfect work of your Son, our relationship and standing with you is secure.

Jesus, you've done the work, and now you are doing the work through us. You're preparing a place for us and are preparing a place in us. Help us respond to your love with love, as we surrender to your way, your truth and your life.

We look back over the course of our lives and we see your faithfulness. We look forward, and while we can't see what is coming, we do know that you will continue to be faithful.

So with all we have and all we are we surrender to your love and sing of your goodness.

ⁱ Jesus' signs and actions demonstrate that he is the Son of God and the Son of Man sent to suffer and restore human relationship with God without sin standing in the way.

ⁱⁱ Dt 18:18; John 8:28-29; 12:49-50; 14:23, 24, 31

ⁱⁱⁱ Two primary options about what "greater works" might mean here. Greater could point to more numerous, simply because all of Jesus' followers will be doing these works as opposed to just one person (Jesus). Greater could also point to the wonder of the work itself. While it is amazing that the divine Son

of God could touch and heal a person's body, it is an even greater thing for Jesus to do it through a redeemed human being! An appendectomy performed by a first mate while on a submerged submarine in the middle of a war zone using bent spoons and alcohol drained from torpedo tubes is a greater work than when the same thing is done in a sterile operating room. (This actually happened in WWII).