

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#26: “Words of Comfort to Believers”

SCRIPTURE: John 14:1-14

INTRO:

I couldn't say it any better than my late friend, Paul Butler, said it in his commentary on the gospel of John:

“Chapter fourteen has been read, quoted, and preached for nearly two thousand years at times of sorrow, stress, and bereavement. It has been a constant source of strength and consolation. This is exactly the purpose it was intended to serve when Jesus uttered it.

“These are words of tenderness from a loving Father to His soon-to-be bereaved children. He is about to leave them, suffering a shameful and agonizing death, and they will be scattered like lambs. The tenderness of Jesus is revealed here as nowhere else. Although He knows that they will soon desert and deny Him, He very patiently and tenderly explains that in His going He will not leave them desolate, but He will send the Strengtheners. He explains that even in His leaving them He is going to prepare a place for them” (p.238).

First of all,

WHY WOULD THEIR HEARTS BE TROUBLED?

In a nutshell, their hearts were going to be troubled at the death of their Master. In spite of Jesus' teaching, they still didn't understand what was happening. They didn't understand that Jesus was the Lamb of God, who had to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. They didn't understand that God would raise him from the dead to rule over His kingdom forever and ever from His home in heaven.

We know that after the crucifixion the disciples were very discouraged at first. The fishermen among them figured that they had just as well go back to their nets and their fishing boats.

Jesus said,

BELIEVE IN GOD; BELIEVE ALSO IN ME.

Literally, the text says, “You are believing in God; you must believe in me also.” Jesus is emphasizing His equality with God. He is saying that His disciples can believe in Him just as they believe in God.

This is something the Jews of that day really had difficulty with. This was a stumbling block to them. They couldn’t get over the reality that their Messiah was a Nazarene. They couldn’t get over the fact that the one they had waited for so long was someone like Jesus. They had developed a picture in their minds of the Messiah, and it didn’t look like Jesus.

Such is true even today. Many today believe in God, but they can’t stomach Jesus. Jesus doesn’t fit their image of a Son of God, or they don’t accept the claim of Jesus as deity.

So, Jesus says, “You are believing in God; you must believe in me also.”

Then He says,

IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY ROOMS.

I know that you like the King James rendering of this: “*In my Father’s house are many mansions.*” But think of that statement carefully. How can a house contain many mansions? A mansion *is* a house – a big house. So, does the Greek text say that in God’s house are many big houses? No, it doesn’t say that.

The Greek word mistranslated as “*mansions*” is MONAI, which means literally “an abiding place; a resting place; a dwelling.” Ecclesiastically (meaning “of the Christian church”), it came to refer to a monastery. The NASB, the NIV, and the ESV all correctly render the Greek “*In my Father’s house are many rooms.*” The New King James Version keeps the word “*mansions,*” probably because those who use it want to keep it.

What Jesus was telling the disciples was that the kingdom of God was a place of rest both here on earth and in heaven. Our heavenly home is referred to in Scripture as “a sabbath rest” (Hebrews 4). He was also telling them that while life in this world is hard and tiresome, the life they would experience after this one is going to be a restful refuge.

Then He promises...

...THAT HE WILL COME BACK FOR DISCIPLES.

He says, ***“I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”***

The New Testament Scriptures contain many references to the return of Christ. One of my favorites is 1st Thessalonians 4:13-17:

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

To sum up Jesus’ words here, heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Time after time God taught this to His chosen people:

- He prepared a Passover lamb and saved His people under Moses;
- He prepared a land of rest and led his people to it;
- All this was a shadow of what was to come. It typified the Perfect Lamb He prepared and gave for the sins of the world;

- And now Jesus has prepared an eternal home in heaven for everybody who will believe in Him.

In the midst of life in this tumultuous world, the promise of Jesus to return and lead believers to eternal life in the New Jerusalem gives us the hope we need to endure.

And then when Thomas expressed doubts concerning the way to God's house, Jesus said:

"I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME."

The original Greek literally reads: "I am the way and I am the truth and I am the life," which means that all three of these things are equal and interchangeable. So, Jesus is saying, "The way is the truth and the life; the truth is the way and the life; the life is the way and the truth." Do you get my drift?

So, first, He says, *"I am the way..."* Early Christians were called "people of the Way." "The Way" connotes a number of things:

- It's "the Way" of Jesus, which was the way of the cross. We used to sing a hymn that said, "The Way of the cross leads home..." The way of the cross was a way of sacrificial living.
- It's not merely a way shown by Jesus; Jesus Himself is "the way." As someone has said, "We are not saved by a *principle* but by a *person*." To be someone of "the Way" is to be someone with a *personal relationship* with Jesus.
- There is a "way" to heaven, not "ways." Jesus says in Matthew 7:13-14 that *"the way"* is narrow, that *"the gate is narrow,"* and that *"the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."*

Second, He says, *"I am the truth..."* He doesn't say, "I am a truth; he says, "I am the truth." Jesus is the embodiment of truth. Paul Butler comments: "Truth is a representation of the reality of things. The life and the teaching of Jesus Christ is the most complete and perfect fulfillment of the types and figures of all other revelations concerning the reality of all things that can ever be

presented to man this side of heaven” (Colossians 2:3; Hebrews 1:1-3) [p. 244].

Third, He says, *“I am the life...”* In other words, those who desire to live and not merely exist must look to Jesus; those who want to live beyond life on this earth must look to Jesus; and those who want to live eternally with God in heaven must look to Jesus. He is the one and only source of such life.

Fourth, He says, *“No one comes to the Father except through me.”* Butler comments here: “There is no religion on the face of the earth that can save a man’s soul except faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Muslims are lost. Buddhists are lost. Jews are lost. All who have never come to a personal commitment of faith, love, trust, and obedience to the Divine Personality, Jesus Christ, and to His revealed word, are LOST! They have no access or communion with God their Father and Creator” (p. 245).

We have been both criticized and ostracized for teaching this tenet of Christianity. Our modern society rejects such exclusivity, but it’s truth.

There’s another important teaching here in chapter 14. Jesus says:

“WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME WILL ALSO DO THE WORKS THAT I DO; AND GREATER WORKS THAN THESE WILL HE DO, BECAUSE I AM GOING TO THE FATHER. WHATEVER YOU ASK IN MY NAME, THIS I WILL DO, THAT THE FATHER MAY BE GLORIFIED. IF YOU ASK ME ANYTHING IN MY NAME, I WILL DO IT.”

The disciples would go on to perform miraculous deeds of supernatural character just as Jesus did, but they and future disciples would do *“greater works.”* What could these *“greater works”* be? I submit that these *“greater works”* are the new births that come through the preaching of the gospel – the changing of people’s lives – the forgiveness of their sins – their conversions to faith in Christ.

And His promise to do whatever they ask in His name is linked to these ***“greater works.”*** He wasn’t giving the disciples then or those to come a blank check to provide anything they wanted. He was giving them and us access to the Holy Spirit as we glorify God and seek to build the kingdom.

IN CLOSING...

C. S. Lewis commented:

“When it comes to eternal matters, we are going to ask the one who is alive the way out of the predicament. This is not Mohammed, not Confucius, but Jesus Christ. Jesus is unique. He came back from the dead. This demonstrates He is the one whom He claimed to be (Romans 1:4), the unique Son of God and the only way by which a person can have a personal relationship with the true and living God.”