

John 13:36–14:14

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[0 : 00] Our Heavenly Father, I now pray that you would forgive me of my sins and hide me behind your cross and speak through my voice that your word might be clearly heard given the time in which we live.

I ask this in Jesus' name, who told us to ask anything of him and that he would do it. And I do so now. Amen. Amen. I'm going to encourage you to keep open before you John 13, 36 through 14, 14.

During this past week, we have all witnessed people across this country emerging from their homes and doing so en masse.

It was a re-entry into this Ecclesiastes-like life under the sun. And it has been a season of hibernation unlike any of us have experienced in our lifetime.

It was a virus that separated us from one another back in the middle of March. And it was a vicious killing of George Floyd, a black man by a white police officer in early May that forcibly shook us, awakened us, compelled us, pushed us beyond our own doors into the light of sun.

[1 : 34] And you might say that America's volcanic-like eruption over these last 10 days into public spaces has flowed forth like molten lava running and overtaking everything in its path.

And it seems to be, to this point in time, increasing in both heat and in force. This, what would we call it?

This collective consequence. This universal activity. This shoe-soul sound on the streets of our state and our mutual soul.

This is revealing the consciousness of a citizenry that is unique in the days of our lives.

Let me say this. It may very well be under the hand of God that we live in an extraordinarily merciful moment in which the church herself can be galvanized with greater clarity.

[2 : 59] There's no doubt that the heart yearns to make something right, Christian or not. To make something that has long laid down wrong.

To straighten that which is crooked. To take a different analogy, something has been simmering perhaps for centuries.

And you live in a moment where it has boiled over and runneth into our paths. Make no mistake.

What you are hearing is the country's unanswered questions which are now publicly on display.

It is the unanswered questions which have compelled us to be in the presence of one another. Let me list some of the questions.

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Can we make sense of the disparate treatment of African Americans, young men in particular, by law enforcement, this public and complex dilemma that has stained our lives?

Is there any way that things can be rectified or corrected or held accountable or presentable or improved?

All of these questions are emerging as each one walks through their own front door. Let me put a more personal tone to it rather than this national sense of our constitutional ideal or this issue of African Americans in law enforcement.

There are many brothers and sisters in our own congregation, day by day, who are asking a series of questions under the quietness of their own home.

[5 : 46] And unfortunately, in separation from interaction with their brothers and sisters in Christ. Some rightly ask, why now?

Not only why would the country be dealing with this, but why now a host, a parade of white America visibly, verbally standing and championing the notion of change?

Why now? Let me ask you another question. Where have you been? Where have you been? This is the heart-aching question of the black community.

Let me ask you some more. Do you know how hurtful this season is? As you emerge to answer your own question of what can I do?

Is there a community that will sit with me in this pain? Indeed, many are asking just a host of questions.

[7 : 05] I don't know how you would be in this season without asking. Others are wondering, am I really as complicit in this present world as others would seem to make me be, given a history that I was not engaged in?

And all of these things are swirling. One thing I know, we all could use a little comfort. Amen? We could use a little comfort.

We could all use a little confidence. A sense of pace beneath our feet. A rising of joyful exchange rather than doleful silence.

We need to be confident. And the church, more than ever, not only needs comfort and confidence, but we need, more than ever, a sure handle on our calling.

What is the church's calling? Now, in light of all that, let us acknowledge that our questions, our questions, which I just enumerated over two or three minutes, come on this side of Jesus' cross and resurrection and ascension.

[8 : 34] What I mean is, we are asking things at a time long after Jesus has already come and what?

Gone. I mean, the bookends of our own text embed everything we're saying today about the concerns and questions of his followers in light of his going.

He is in heaven. Jesus is above. We are on earth. We dwell below. He sits enthroned in glory.

We're left standing in the mud. He rules. And many of you feel as though his visible absence makes us flail away in the darkness trying to find our way.

Where do we go with our questions? Where do we go with our questions? Wouldn't it be just like God to provide us the help we need in this historic hour on this side of the cross?

[9 : 56] Not by having our questions take the lead, but rather the questions of his followers on the previous side of the cross.

Those to whom he actually spoke and indicated for them the comfort they would need with his going, the confidence he could give in their living, and the calling that they were to have while he was away.

I do think it would be just like God to meet the needs of Christ Church Chicago and our country by sitting quietly for 20, 25 minutes here and allowing the disciples' questions to guide our conversation into what our life is to look like in light of his ascension into heaven.

Let's take a look. I mean, certainly if you've heard the text read by Milton this morning, it doesn't take long to see that we have here a series of questions.

It is almost as though this text were a question and answer session with Jesus. Peter leads it off in verse 36 with his question.

[11 : 25] Thomas will enter the dialogue at verse 5 of chapter 14 with a second question. And then Philip will sit in this conversational place with his Lord and ask a third question there in verse 8.

This is really interesting. You have a question and answer session with Jesus to help his children gain comfort, confidence, and clarity of calling for the season in which he would be away.

Think of it this way. As someone mentioned to me this week, it is like overhearing an exit interview. And the interview, the questioners are the disciples who will remain in the organization in which they're running around.

And the one who is departing is Jesus himself. But their questions of him will inform them on their future life together.

So let's take a look. I am convinced that what you and I need this morning is provided not by allowing our questions to run in front of us, but by allowing our lives to be led by those they asked of him.

[12 : 52] Peter's first. There he is. Verse 36. His question is right there. Lord, where are you going? If you had to have a parallel question on the backside of the cross, it would have been coming from you and me like this.

Lord, where have you gone? But the answer to the where you're going is going to inform your heart's soulful desire to know what happens in the absence of his presence.

Look at the answer Jesus provides. It's very instructive. First of all, his answer in one sense says, well, where I'm going is a place you cannot go. It's a place you've never been to.

But along the way, know this, you will get there at some point. Jesus answered him, where am I going? You cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterwards.

This is a clear answer from Jesus that there is a plan beyond his departure for the reunion of himself in the presence of his people.

[14 : 07] And of course, Peter, like you and like me, can't fathom anything beyond the universe in which he is dwelling. He says, well, Lord, why can't I not follow you now?

I will go anywhere you go. Where will you go that I cannot go? And Jesus seems to pull the curtain back from answer to admonishment, and I think lovingly so.

Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times. You see, for Peter, this world was his only reality.

And for Jesus, he indicates there is a reality beyond this world that is so great that in your fallenness and in your frailty and in the limitation of your own mind, you will be incapable of being with me or even remaining yourself with faithful fidelity to me all along the way.

What a word for us. This sense that he moves from answer to admonishment to what I really want to see is the assurance. Notice how Jesus immediately doesn't get lost in Peter's denial.

[15 : 26] He immediately moves to verses one through three where there is assurance. Let not your heart be troubled. This is what Jesus wanted him to know regarding his question, where are you going?

And the reality that Peter would feel alone. In one sense, yes, he would be alone. And his answer is, by way of comfort, believe in God, believe in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am, you may be also.

It is good for you and me this morning to be reminded that he will come again. That this world is not all there is.

Now, this is something that the African American church has been teaching the church universal for centuries. This enduring, joyful, persistent hope that while we have not arrived here, while we labor to make it better here, our ultimate hope, our absolute comfort, my ability to persevere joyfully in all the inadequacies of the world, ultimately rests in that he is going to bring us to himself in an everlasting home, in a place where there is a room.

[16 : 51] And if you take this room here to be its linguistic sense of the old time holy of holies, it is almost as if there is going to be a moment when you and I dwell with Jesus in what is the holy of holies, that within the most sacred place all of his family will be.

No outer veil, no tent of the women, no court of the Gentiles, but rather rooms, rooms upon rooms upon rooms within the most intimate place where we have with God.

this is our ultimate comfort. And this is something that answers our question. How do I walk forward when it feels to me as though Jesus is gone?

He has promised. He has promised and he will do it. I think about this is a truth we must not forget.

This is a truth that must be ours forever. The hope of heaven. The hope of heaven cannot be drowned out while we have given ourselves to the righteous pursuits that need to be made right on earth.

[18 : 13] In all that we need to be active on now, it does not mean that we are not to be dwelling on heaven. This is ultimately something we can bank on regardless of what happens here on earth.

I think of the way that we thought to think about the future. One writer, David Wells, who I studied under at seminary, put it this way.

He said, the modern world has become for so many a matter of ultimacy. All moderns are in this sense believers. Their world gives them their values and horizons, their life, their sustenance, and they look for nothing outside or beyond what modernity provides.

By way of contrast, he says, I do not believe in much that is present because I believe too much in what is now thought not to be present.

I disbelieve in the modern world because I believe in God and in his truth and in Christ. And as you and I walk through this very moment concerned with writing all of the injustices of this world, do not think that you will not be benefited by long, thoughtful, beneficial conversation, meditation on your ultimate home, on heaven.

[19 : 41] I can't think of any more clear way to say that. This is why when people are ill, when our bodies decay, this chapter is the comfort.

This is why when your business or your home burns down, this eternal home is fixed and enables you to endure.

forever. This is why when relationships are difficult, a future final family reunion is worthy of my persistence and perseverance.

It was John Watson, the great preacher, who said that when he found someone in his flock who was dying, going through deep waters and almost ready to expire, sometimes he would kneel down next to them and whisper, in my father's house are many mansions.

And he would see even within them and hear them repeating, some of them in their last breath on earth, father's house, many mansions.

[20 : 56] This is the comfort of the Christian faith. It is wonderfully clear from this text that the church in this hour is to derive comfort from the knowledge that we will one day be with him.

Peter's question, given the comfort of heaven. Thomas moves from the question of where to a question of way.

Look at verse 5, Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you're going, how can we know the way? the parallel question then in our own world is that where Peter asks for where, Thomas asks for way, it is true to form then in his response that Jesus, just like he admonished Peter and gave him comfort, here you're going to see that in his answer, there's a certain correction given to Thomas, but then confidence is what's instilled.

This is fascinating, just notice the parallel, Jesus said to him, verse 6, I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me, if you had known me, you would have known my Father.

In other words, he answers it, I am the way, and you should have known that, the soft correction, but his ultimate goal is increased confidence.

[22 : 30] confidence. Look what he does. From now on you do know him and have seen him. And for the church today who languishes in confidence in what is the way in which we are to go, what is the road in which we are to walk, the answer of the scripture is clear.

We are confidently followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way. He is the parade I'm in. He is the one I'm following.

He is the one that we ought to be like a great river of individuals marching behind. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, and for us, that confidence means that we know it.

It isn't as if we're unsure about what we believe. He is it. And in the simplest of terms, and oversimplified, I know it is. Jesus is the answer to all the issues of our day.

Andre Crouch, Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above him there's no other King. Jesus is the way.

[23 : 43] Don't let anyone ridicule you for the elevation of Jesus as the way. the early Christians were known as people of the way.

They were known as the followers of Christ. And this is very informative for us by way of confidence. As a body of Christ, we stand with him.

Now that doesn't mean that I can't stand with others on certain issues that are of concern to him whether or not I stand ultimately within them. In other words, we have to be in the world but not of the world.

There's no question. Black space, live space matters, period, ought to be elevated and trumpeted and something that I can stand beside.

But that doesn't mean that black lives matter after the hashtag has to somehow embody as a national movement all of my ideals. or strategies or tactics or convictions or ultimate ends.

[24 : 57] But I am in it in the sense of championing the justice that ought to be brought. Think of it when you vote for a political party. How many of you have ever voted for a candidate of a political party and thereby indicated your endorsement of all things and planks within that party?

It can't possibly be true that an individual is capable of standing in something for something but not necessarily being completely part of something.

And we ought to be confident. I walk with Jesus. I champion the rights of human dignity. I'll stand with any and all who do. And if those same movements arrive at a moment in time when they tell me I can be part of the movement but my Jesus must be left at home, well then I'll challenge it.

For I am constantly, constantly a follower of my Lord. We ought to have great confidence in this coming day. Great confidence to walk with Jesus and to call out anything on either side.

Philip, he's third. Where Peter asks where and is admonished but then comforted and Thomas asks what is the way wherein he was given some soft correction but confidence.

[26 : 30] Philip, I think, could be paraphrased to be asking well then what then will you give us while you're away? Look what he says in verse 8.

Show us the Father and that's going to be enough for us. And like, okay, I get it. You're leaving. It's not all clear to me but what are you going to leave behind? I mean, what are you going to give me in light of your absence?

sense? And notice the answer again beautifully all three times. In this sense, there is a challenge given to him but then a calling established not only for him but for all of us.

Look at the challenge. Jesus said, have I been with you so long and you've not seen the Father? How can you say show us the Father? Do you not believe that I'm the Father and the Father is in me? I mean, what a great Q&A; that's going on here.

Questions back and forth. And Jesus hearing the heartbeat of Philip who wants some lasting presence or indication that he's on the right way.

[27 : 39] Jesus points him to two things. What does he point him to? He points him to his word and his works. Now, notice that. It's pristine. Peter wants to know where he gets comfort.

Thomas wants to know the way he gets confidence. Philip says, well, then what then do we have? And Jesus says, my word and my works.

Do you see that there? He says in verse 10, do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me works.

Believe me, I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Believe on account of the works themselves. And then verses 12 to 14 almost seem to be the furious, wonderful conclusion to this conversation.

It's almost as though the words and the works that Philip saw now are expanded out to the church that will follow Philip even to you and me.

[28 : 48] This is what we are given by way of calling and participation after he's gone. Truly, truly, I say to you, verse 12, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do because I'm going to the Father.

And whatever you ask in my name, this I will do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. Now, what do we have here?

I want to just slow this down because it is so worthy of the five minutes of your concentration. What was the nature of the work that Jesus came to do?

Secondly, what kind of response does he want from me and you? And then thirdly, from this text, what and how do I participate in not only what he does but the greater works that we are meant to do?

I mean, this takes some mental apprehension. This takes some explanation. One cannot merely bounce from these verses to some simple exhortation.

[30 : 07] So let's just get it clear. What was the nature of the work Jesus came to do? John's already answered it. It isn't up to you and me to determine the nature of the work.

Turn back to chapter five and take a look at verse seventeen and twenty and twenty one. Chapter five and verse seventeen, and Jesus answered them, my father is working until now and I am working.

Whatever the work is, Jesus is doing the works that the father is doing. And then when you look a little further, verses twenty and twenty one, for the father loves the son and shows him all that he himself is doing and greater works than these he will show him so that you may marvel for as the father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the son gives life to whom he will.

the work that Jesus is doing and did is raising the dead and giving them life. And we know throughout John that is way larger than our material physical reconstruction of a body that was healed from a sickness or disease.

For John, the life that Jesus brings from beginning to end of his gospel is eternal life. What is God doing? The Father. He's bringing people to spiritual life and restoration and wellness with him.

[31 : 45] And Jesus is doing that work. That's what Jesus is doing. I know there may be people that say, no, the works that we're going to be doing, it's going to relate to something spiritual in the sense of miraculous healing.

Or there might be other people that would indicate to you in the coming days. No, the work that Jesus is doing is really material and it's simply the horizontal element that we bring.

But John is clear. It's life. It's eternal life. And this is what he brings in his cross. This is why the cross remains central to us.

This is why the death of Christ will always matter to us. And it's not only that sense of the particularity of his mission. Notice the personal nature of it.

It's not just vertical although it is vertical. It's actually personal. The second question we ask what kind of response does Jesus want from you?

[32 : 46] What does Jesus want from you while he is gone? Well look back. He's already told us. Take a look at chapter 6 in verse 28 through 36.

There's a little vignette there in the scriptures that begin to speak about what your response ought to do. Verse 28 then he said to him what must we do to be doing the works of God?

And Jesus answered him this is the work of God that you believe in him who he has sent. I'm telling you the calling of the church is clear.

It's the life that comes through Christ and the comfort of that eternal dwelling with him and the participation of it for you first and foremost is a personal apprehension grasping receiving adopting taking Jesus as your own to believe to believe he is the bread of life that he is the light of the world that he is the sacrificial substitution for your sin that he is the one who actually is to be!

trusted upon by you trusted on by you that is the work you to do and it's not just in 628 you could look at 839 to indicate that this has always been the case from the scriptures beginning to end for in 839 they answered him Abraham is our father and Jesus said to them if you were Abraham's children you would be doing what you be doing the works that Abraham did but now you seek to kill me a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God this is not what Abraham did well what did Abraham do he believed he believed that God would be the giver of life this this is so revolutionary these three verses for the church and the simplicity and the clarity of our calling what is the work that Jesus does he brings life from death he restores you into a relationship with

[34 : 59] God and that requires something personal from you and me belief and trust and that then is something that we ought to proclaim but I'm almost done what then does it mean that we participate in the work of Jesus but not only participate that we will do greater works than he did there are many in my own extended family who believe that the greater works that we are to do are the miraculous there are others all around our country that believe that the greater works that we are to do are to create a movement that simply sits on a social plane and what I want to try to say is that it's not merely a spiritual thing or a social thing the work that he's told us to do here and the thing that we participate in is first of all proclaiming his name every Christian of Christ church should be ready at all moments to testify who

Jesus to Jesus who is life there ought to be a strong element of that proclamation that is if he is doing that through him then you help others come to life by speaking to them of him but notice it's not just vertical this is something I want to shut this message down on look at verse 13 and 14 this really nuanced Johannine vocabulary in two of his texts here and in one of his epistles he picks up whatever you ask in my name this I will do that the father may be glorified in the son if you ask me anything in my name I will do it the asking interestingly John will pick up on those terms in first John and I'd like you to see it because it is so important not only for what we're going to do tonight at 730 but for the lives we're going to live together in this city first John if I could find it myself 4

I'm sorry first John 5 verses 13 to 16 now notice how he picks up on the language of our text I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God that you may know that you have eternal life we've just gone over that but verse 14 and this is the confidence that we have toward him that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us that's prayer and we know that he hears us in whatever we ask we know that we have the request that we have asked of him but notice the context verse 16 if anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death he shall ask and the God will give him life this is what it means for us not only do we proclaim the name of Jesus but we are to gather in the name of Jesus and in prayer be willing to look at sin a brother committing a sin this is why the church can easily should triumphantly clearly simply state that racism of any and all order is sin that an action against your brother is an action against your

God that what you do to the least is what you do to him who is the greatest and we ought to be interceding the church marches in this way on her knees and indeed tonight you come tonight at 730 if you really believe this find the zoom one of our elders Doug Rothschild will lead our time but he specifically asked David and Sharice Barr members of our own congregation who in their own marriage and oneness wrestled their way forward on black and white and we will grieve tonight we will lament tonight we will sit with one another tonight and we will pray about the sins that are within our own hearts and within our own culture and within our own country that we may therefore have life I'm so happy to be a member of this church

I'm so proud of you as a member of this church I see you wanting to proclaim the name of Jesus by participating in his work I know you to be a people who are prayerfully engaged just this last week two women in our church one white and one black calling the women together on zoom to pray over these things to sit with one another I watch people go over to the door of hope who has just been decimated by a fire and beginning to labor together I see you providing meals for hundreds of people who are front line workers I watch as the stores have been closed down and now more meals are being made because people can't find their groceries I'm seeing proclamation I'm seeing provision I'm seeing prayer I'm seeing I'm seeing in Christ church the seeds the seeds of a people who are who will be and will call others to join us in the comfort that we have in

[40 : 50] Christ this world is not our home we're just a passing through with the confidence that are to mark us in Christ and with the clarity of our calling to participate in the work of Christ I'm done with virtue signaling this is our calling they will know we're followers of Christ as we love one another and our neighborhood and our city in this way let me pray our heavenly father I've gone I've gone long today especially for people that are sitting at home and on their own but I pray that you would take the words of my mouth the meditation of my heart the conviction of my character the calling of this church that you would continue to accomplish something through us in all of our weakness we now come to you collectively in song in

Jesus name amen