

When Jesus Says Good-bye ... For Now

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[0 : 00] If you do have a copy of John 14, I think you would find it immensely helpful to turn to it. I'm not going to, in this message, cover all that we read in the 31 verses.

I'm going to be looking primarily at the first, oh, 21 verses. I have been studying, because of an upcoming test, on passage planning.

Now, that has to do with boat navigation. In fact, I've been told that one of the tests is that you'll go down into the cabin of the boat.

They'll close the hatch. They will black out the windows. And you cannot use the GPS electronic devices. And I can't cheat and use my smartphone that I have all my navigational shortcuts on. So, without any electronic or technological assistance, I have to determine where the boat is, where we're going, and how to get there.

[1 : 12] Now, one of the things that you'll have is, you have aids that are physical. It's called a plotter. And you might be able to see that you've got a, like a ruler, you've got a line there.

But this dial in the front here moves. And so, I'll put this onto my map, my sea map or navigational map.

And I'll point the pointer in the direction that I'm going. And I'll say that I've determined that my boat is somewhere over here.

And this is the direction that I want to go. Now, I will then, once I've got that on my map, I will turn this dial, again, based on how this sits onto my sea map.

And it will tell me my bearing. Now, this is more stuff than you want to know. And I know it's boring stuff, but I geek out on it. And it'll tell me my bearing.

[2 : 16] So that I know not only my destination's direction, but I know how to steer my boat.

That's my bearing to get to this destination. Now, one last thing. I love the Western Isles of Scotland.

But you very rarely are you here. And your destination is here. And there's no island or obstacle or sandbar or a wreck or something in between where you are and where you're going to go.

And that's called a waypoint. So that you shorten your destination. You say, okay, I'm here.

I'm going to go there. And then once there, I'm going to be back on track to go here. All right, that's the sermon tonight. It was great. It was short.

[3 : 25] And like a good Episcopalian, Anglican. I've left you and you say, well, it's kind of a cute story. But I had no bearing on my life. And the passage tonight finds the disciples with troubled hearts.

And we're going to look at that. And we're going to see what the problem is. And it's a troubled heart. But they're troubled because Jesus has said, I'm going away.

Back in chapter 13, which we didn't read, in verse 33, this is the Lord's Supper. It's Jesus' final sermon.

It's called the comfort sermon by some. By others, it's called the departure sermon. In verse 33 of John 13, Jesus says, Little children, yet a little while I am with you.

You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. And then begins a conversation with Peter, because Peter said, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute.

[4 : 43] I'll tell you what, wherever you go, I go. We're tight. I'm not. And Jesus, I think, the Bible doesn't give us body language, but I think he probably just says, man, I love you, Peter.

I love that, but yeah. You can't follow me yet. Because where I'm going, it's a way, it's the Via Dolorosa.

It's a path of suffering. It's a way of suffering. You can't go that way, but you'll follow later, by death.

Peter says, no, no, no, I'll stay with you. No, no, Peter, you're actually going to depart too. You're going to depart me. It sets up a confusion that we read about, and what they're confused about is, Jesus is saying that he's going away.

Where is he going? What's his destination? Now, why is this important?

[6 : 10] In our life, we have to navigate waypoints. It could be, as Bill Dunlop is experiencing, even this evening, the loss of a dear mother, the loss of loved ones who depart.

It could be the departure of our own health. Cancer, that many times can seem like a ticking clock. Thinking of our own departure.

Perhaps it's a broken relationship, the departing of a loved one that way. Maybe it's a departing of a job.

You lost your job. There are other goodbyes, as it were, things that we wish that stayed present with us, that we've received word, that we have knowledge that it's going to depart.

Jesus brings comfort with his departure by telling us and giving us assurance of our destination.

[7 : 30] Our destination, eternal life, is not a direct route. And thankfully, some of us can be glad for that.

We'd be there now. You're forgetting all your sins? Boom! Heaven. But while life on earth remains, there are obstacles, trials, struggles, these departures that come in the way.

And if you know, and if you hang on to the destination, if you have an eternal view while on earth, you can navigate those things.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to Colossians, said it this way. Speaking to that congregation, he said, Seek the things above.

This is Colossians 3, verses 1 and 2. Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. He gives him a visual. He says, seek those things.

[8 : 42] Those things. The thing of imagining the truth that where Christ is. He is departed, but physically he's at the right hand of God. Verse 2.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. One of my Valley of Vision prayers this week, entitled, Christ's Lightness, says, teach me the happy art of attending to things temporal, earthly, with a mind intent on things eternal.

If you want a strap line for the big idea, it would be, this message is about Jesus temporarily saying goodbye, in order to permanently say hello.

Jesus is departing, but when we understand his destination, and we keep the eternal view, his destination in mind as our destination, then we're able to navigate life.

I want you to see three things. First of all, I want you to see the problem. That's troubled hearts.

Second of all, I want you to see the place that Jesus says that he is going.

[10 : 23] He calls it, not heaven, but my Father's house. And then thirdly, I want to introduce you, once again, to the person, known as the paraclete.

One who comes alongside, who joins us in navigating these waypoints, and who keeps our hearts fixed, and has set this eternity in our hearts, so that we long for heaven.

Verse 1, Jesus, and this is a long sermon, by the way. No, not this sermon, but Jesus' sermon. I hope this sermon's not too long.

Jesus' sermon is chapter 14, chapter 15, and chapter 16. From there, he leaves the Passover feast, the table, and he goes to the garden, and we have John 17, where we have something called Jesus' high priestly prayer.

And in that high priestly prayer, is where he prays, very specifically, God, we're one.

[11 : 53] And I'm one with the disciples. Let's connect all the dots. Just as me and you are one, I want the disciples to be one with us.

That was Jesus' prayer. It was already on his mind, as he seeks to comfort the disciples. The problem is, he says, let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God, believe also in me. The problem is, their hearts are troubled. And that's because, it's not only that Jesus is talking about going away, and very soon, but it's almost like it's a trifecta of departures.

He's already, he begins, back in chapter 13, with verse 31, before he announces his departure. And this is not the first occasion that he's talked about this.

He's a man on a mission. And Jesus always has eternity in his mind. He always has the future in his mind. He says, we must go to Jerusalem. I will be falsely tried.

[13:06] I will be mocked. I will be killed. I will be buried. I will rise again. He's a man on a mission with a future in mind.

But not so much these disciples. In verse 31 of chapter 13, he says, it says, when he had gone out, Jesus said, and that was when he announces his departure.

The he that has gone out is Judas. So Judas has departed to betray him. Now Jesus is talking about his departure. And then Peter says, I will stay with you.

And Jesus says, no, you're going to depart too. So the disciples are processing. All these people are leaving. But we believe that the thing that troubled their heart the most was navigating life without the presence of Jesus.

And well, our heart should be troubled. I tell my kids, and I don't think my kids would be joining us online, but they don't have to because they'd be saying, this is dad's old saw.

[14:23] It's insanity to navigate life without Jesus. Let me say that again. It's insanity. And I'm not trying to be overly dramatic. It's insane. It's crazy.

Because you can't do it. And they know that. This is Jesus that they love.

And for three years, they've been walking with him. And he's the rabbi. They've given up their jobs. They've given up their families to follow him. And so, how do you do life without a sense of the presence of Jesus?

Because you know, we can have that problem in our life. We can live like those, that strange set of disciples that we believe in the Lord.

We believe in the history that we had with the Lord. But he's invisible. And so, that means he's not present, we think. And so, we try to do life without him being present.

[15:36] And that troubled their hearts. I have a couple of interests. And in addition to learning about boat navigation and passage planning, to be a good captain.

I also am interested in World War II history. In World War II, America saved many, many lives with the 23rd Army.

Now, the 23rd Army, February of this year, were given Congressional Medals of Honor by our current president, Joe Biden.

Because for the last 77 years, nobody knew knew the story of the 23rd Army.

They were called the Ghost Army. And for the, for 50 years after World War II, they were instructed, don't tell anyone.

[16:49] The Ghost Army was a crazy bunch of soldiers, men and women. They weren't trained for firearms.

They were artists and they were actors. And the 23rd Army even made up insignia. They didn't really exist.

They were a mock force force to draw the attention of the German forces. The German forces were listening on air and there was false communication.

The German forces were looking from the air and they would see all these tanks but they were inflatables made of rubber. The German forces would send in spies and bulldozers had dug out tracks as if those inflatable tanks had moved.

And for 50 years after the war the army men and women of the 23rd Army they were just dismissed.

[18:08] They were just discharged. Nothing was said and they were to say nothing. when they got their congressional medal of honor from the president one of them expressing what a lot of them felt saying all of our life we never knew if what we were doing made a difference.

We never heard any of the results. We never knew what our mission accomplished. We never knew where we were going.

And so we felt like we were just actors ourselves with a bunch of wilting, deflating rubber tanks. our problem if we don't know where our destination is, it's going to affect our mission, our service, our ministry, our walk with Jesus.

I've got at least four problems, four problems that will trouble your heart if you don't have an eternal perspective.

[19:33] See if you can own one of these. Number one, you see Jesus as a forgiver, but you don't see him as a restorer, a life changer, a transformer, molding you to be a son or daughter.

Number two, you see life as joylessly difficult until you die.

You become stoic. I believe, but following, coming to believe in Jesus and following my death when I go to heaven, it's just a slog.

number three, you come to see this earth, which is temporary, is more attractive than heaven, which is eternal.

You don't want to leave. You don't want to go. And then number four, and I've circled this in red on my notes, I see myself as being on my own.

[21 : 01] I'm alone having to work out my way home. I don't sense Jesus' nearness. I don't experience His presence.

I feel like I'm on my own. I love it. I know I've spent too long on this point, but I don't want you to miss something about just the beauty of Jesus.

He is so tender to come and He says, I don't want this for you. Phil, I don't want your heart troubled with these things.

I don't want you to experience this sense of doing life on your own and without my presence. And when He says in verse 1, let not your hearts be troubled, can I tell you how beautiful this is?

Because if you were to look back again to chapter 13 which wasn't read, in verse 21, we find John recording, after saying these things, Jesus was troubled in His spirit and testified, truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

[22 : 34] Jesus is rightfully troubled. He's going to the cross. God's love. The one who saved others would not save himself so he could save us.

He is rightly troubled. He will become sin in God's sight and God will not relent. God will treat him with the justice that we deserve.

He had never known anything but the Father's love and now he will know the Father's wrath and separation from him. He is troubled.

But in chapter 14, he puts that trouble aside and he says, little ones, I don't want you to be troubled. Well, how does he give him some medicine for their heart to not be troubled? How does he calm their heart? How does he give them comfort?

[23 : 48] Well, in verses 2 and 3, he talks about a place. And this place, he says, the only two ways he describes the place is in verse 2, he says, my father's house, which has many rooms.

And then in verse 3, he says, it's a place where I am. Now, we know that this is heaven. And he's going there.

And he tells them, I want you to know that I am departing. It troubles their hearts. But now, he says, if you'll be mindful of the place that I'm going, if you'll be mindful that this is my destination, it will bring you comfort.

Can I tell you, I don't fly. I mean, I love to fly, but I'm not a pilot. And I never really had any ambition. I mean, I went to a military university, and that was my MOS, my designation, was to be a helicopter pilot. Well, I flunked out.

[25 : 06] And you probably are safe, the world's safer because of it. But one of the reasons that I flunked out was because landings are hard.

Taking off is easy, but landing is very, very hard. Jesus is saying, I'm going to heaven and I'm going to stick the landing. the disciples would know that getting into heaven is no easy feat.

Getting into heaven is dangerous for disciples even. But Jesus is saying, I'm going ahead of you into heaven and I'm going to make it a safe place.

And when he says, I'm going to prepare a place for you, he's not talking about turning down the bed. Or he's not talking about adding another wing on the mansion.

He's not talking about building something that's not currently awaiting us. What he is communicating is he's securing your reservation.

[26 : 13] Not just for the eleven around that Passover table, but for every disciple. He says, I've already checked you in.

Don't worry if you're on the road late and you're thinking, wow, it's so late, we're going to get into this hotel so late, I wonder if they held our reservation. Don't worry. Jesus has already checked us in.

And he's prepared the way to get there so that what was a dangerous place with Jesus there becomes a very safe place. And notice that this causes Thomas to have a question.

He's saying, okay, so you're saying that's your destination, that you're departing to go there, and that we're going to join you there, but if you're not with us presently, we don't know the way there, so how do we get there?

Again, I can only imagine Jesus saying, you know the way. way. You know the way, Thomas, if you think about it. The way is not a path.

[27 : 24] The way is not even a set of rules. The way is me. I am the way, and that is the truth for the life, the eternal life.

And the article the impresses upon us that there is no other. There is no other way to land safely in heaven. There is no other way, and the way is a person.

And the way is a person who is Jesus. And so Jesus is leading up to the fact that his departure is a good thing.

God is going to me. I've listed three really good things.

If I bear in mind that Jesus has gone to eternal dwellings, heaven, to await me, or, as he says here, I will come again and will take you to myself.

[28 : 45] Our souls go to heaven if we die now, but he'll come back and our bodies and our souls are going to be joined together in a mysterious way. But he says, I will come again and I'm going to take you to myself.

It's almost like a lover will say, I'm going to come and I'm going to have you for me. You're my prize. You're my beauty. It's not like, I'm going to come, I'm going to get everybody on board and I'll get you there.

It's more like, no, I'm going to come and personally escort you because I'm the way. It takes a person. But here, here are three wonderful things that knowing that destination awaits us creates. Number one, it solves the real estate crisis. You know, I know that some of you as young adults would like to buy a home.

And you're like, wow, how do we, with mortgage rates going up, housing scarcity, our low income, inflation, how do we buy a home? We'd really like to have a home.

[30 : 01] I'd really like to have a piece of real estate. Or maybe it's other real estate. Or maybe it's just materialism. My piece of this earth. Well, if I know I have a place in heaven, it tames my desire to own stuff in this earth.

It tames the materialism lion. Number two, the great benefit of knowing the place that Jesus has gone, that awaits me, is it answers my life-after-death questions.

The life-after-death question of fear. There's no fear here. And he says this to troubled hearts. knowing this destination and believing Jesus like they believe in God for this destination brings their hearts comfort.

Maybe it's you don't even have a thought. Well, this answers why you should have a thought about life-after-death. Are you going to heaven? Are you comforted by that fact?

Do you think, well, I'm going to heaven, but I dread it? Well, a good study of what heaven's like, and it's joys that await you and loved ones that love the Lord will put you in a right frame of mind.

[31 : 28] And then lastly, and this is, if I was talking to ministerial students or if I was talking to pastors, I would expand on this, but ministry frustrations and prayer.

Because Jesus is in heaven, he says, you'll do greater work than I will do. Now, that's not qualitative work. You won't do better work, but you'll do more of it.

It's quantitative. More disciples doing more things, joyfully, happy service. By my being in heaven, I'm equipping you, resourcing you.

I'm expanding service opportunities, your local capacity to serve at Glasgow City Free Church or Partick Free Church.

And then prayer. It's because Jesus is at the right hand of God that with this eternal view that he ever lives to intercede, we can pray with confidence knowing that he hears every prayer and he will answer everyone.

[32 : 42] And he'll answer it for our good. He'll answer it in the positive. Well, lastly, I can't end without saying a word about the Holy Spirit.

Because Jesus has said to troubled hearts, here's the destination and it awaits you too. he concludes by saying in verse 18, I will not leave you as orphans.

Now, we're in the nose bead part of the climb. I've had some opportunities to hike and there are certain climbs that you get to such an altitude that one of three things are going to happen to your head.

Number one, you're going to get a headache. Or, number two, you're going to get really sleepy. Or, number three, and this is me, you get sappy silly.

You just get silly, giddy. well, we're in this kind of rarefied air where he's basically saying, I'm going to say goodbye, but then I'm going to say hello.

[34 : 13] I'm going to be departing, but then I'm going to come forever. He says in verse 15, excuse me, verse 16, that he's going to ask the father to give a helper, and that word is paraclete.

It's not like a personal assistant. It's not like a house helper, something like that. Some of your Bibles may even have advocate, which is a legal counselor defending us.

But this word for paraclete is, we don't have an English equivalent to define it, but it means someone who comes alongside, someone who is personally present.

And he says in verse, what he says in verse 16, he says, he will give you another helper.

He says that because he was the first paraclete that came along beside the disciples. him. And then he proceeds to talk about the Holy Spirit with masculine pronouns.

[35 : 34] Him. J.I. Packer, who I think wrote the classic book on the Holy Spirit, says that the Holy Spirit is not it.

it. The Holy Spirit is not an it. The Holy Spirit is a person and that person is the Spirit of Jesus, Jesus himself.

Time doesn't permit me to turn you to the other scriptures, particularly the Pauline epistles, where Paul interchangeably talks about the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus.

And the Holy Spirit is seemingly so shy that it only illuminates Jesus and represents Jesus and magnifies Jesus' presence with us.

Have you experienced the Holy Spirit? I think as Presbyterians and Reformed types, very often we're really good on worship of the Father.

[36 : 49] And we run a close second to the Baptist emphasizing Jesus, our Savior. But I don't believe we do such a good job of emphasizing the Holy Spirit.

And I think part of it is because we don't quite know how to get our mind around the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is more of an experience than it is simply truth on a page.

Have you experienced the Holy Spirit? Well, it would be another sermon to tell you all the ways that you can experience the Holy Spirit.

But let me give you just two. First of all, Romans 8, verse 14, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, and that's also daughters.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

[38 : 18] Have you experienced the Holy Spirit? Verse 16, Romans 8, The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Do you know that God is your Father? Full stop. J.I. Packer says this is the main task of the Holy Spirit. To give you joyful assurance that you are adopted and a child and forever you are.

Have you experienced that? And then secondly in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13 and 14 In him you also, that is Christ, in him when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and you believed in him, we trust him for the forgiveness of our sin, you were at that moment sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

And what is the experience to validate that you're in Christ, you're in the Father, and the Spirit is in you, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

in other words, he puts eternity in our heart. You're no longer an orphan without a father or an orphan without a home.

[39 : 56] You begin to love the Father in a very special way. You know your destination. You look at every trial, every departure that you will face now, you will say, that's not a detour taking me away from my destination, it's just one more milestone on the way home.

You know where you're going, and I dare say that you're excited about it. That's my prayer for us, that's my prayer for me, is that we will experience more and more the Holy Spirit in our worship, in our community, in our life, the very presence of Jesus with us, now and forever.

Amen. Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word. I pray, Jesus, that you would ever, through the Holy Spirit, remind us that we're never alone, that your presence is always with us, to guide, to protect, to comfort, to lead us on all the way home.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.