

What Comes Next?

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[0:00] All right. This is going to be difficult because this is a difficult sermon.

! I really struggled with this.! I told Matt the other day, I said, you know, it's not really...! You know, we're in the last discourse of Jesus.

It's been going for several chapters now where he's telling them, trying to get the disciples ready for his departure. He's going to be crucified and resurrected and then depart.

And he's trying to give them their last, really, encouragement, but also warning and teaching and whatnot. So we're in John 16. So you open up your Bibles, John 16.

I've got verses 1 through 17 or 16 and thereabouts. We're going to focus on two areas as opposed to the whole thing.

[1:11] If you remember what Matt talked about last week, who was here last week, do you remember the one big word that he used? He had it on the screen, a big word.

Oh, boy. Oh, boy. Yeah, yeah. Testify. Yeah, everybody. Oh, yeah, I remember that. Well, he's correct. We're supposed to be ready and willing to share what we know, and that is particularly that Jesus is indeed the only way to forgiveness and grace and salvation and new life.

And there were to tell about it as we've experienced it. And that, I think, was one of the points of his whole sermon was it isn't you have to have memorized the four spiritual laws and have all the scriptures tied to it so that you can give a theological exposition on the salvation in Christ by grace and faith.

It's this is what I know. This is how I experienced him. This is how I found him. This is what he did to me and in me and around me because of that. This is what he showed me.

And you tell your story and who can criticize it. It's your story. They can say, well, I don't agree with that, but they can't say you're wrong because they didn't experience it the way you did.

[2:28] All right? So I think that's probably a big thing that we need to come to grips with. And do you remember what Matt said right after he talked about testify?

He says, not everybody's going to like you. Some are going to hate you. We might experience it. Jesus says we would. And those that hate him are going to hate us as well. But we're not supposed to despair.

That's not, you know, you're not going to heaven because the world loves you. So we're not, shouldn't despair. We shouldn't get upset.

And then in my section, well, I think Matt talked about it too, but in my section, it's also going to say he's going to send the Holy Spirit. He says, if I go away, I'll send you the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit's going to become our advocate. Someone's going to speak for you on your behalf.

Your counselor, someone who's going to give you guidance and help, encouragement. And a fellow traveler. And a paraclete really means fellow traveler. And that's what Jesus calls a spirit, a paraclete.

[3:30] Fellow traveler. Someone who walks alongside of you. Who goes with you. Who's always there with you. So we're going to pick up that discussion and we're going to, and in 16, and we're going to start out with verses 1 through 5, actually 1 through 4.

So let's, let's read that. And if I can get this thing to work, we're good. There we are. And this is what it says. I have told you all these things so that you will not fall away.

Now, I think that's, I'm going to just sort of stop there because I'm not really going to talk about that. But there you go. Watch out. He says, I told you these things so you will not fall away.

We were just doing Exodus in Sunday school and the one verse said, the Lord didn't take them by the route along the sea to the Philistines because he was afraid they might turn around and go back to Egypt.

Because they would see, oh, the Philistines, we're going to go to war. They would get discouraged. Jesus says, all this is going to happen to you. Don't worry about it. Don't fall away.

[4:34] Don't turn around and head back into the world. They will put you out of the synagogue. Yet a time is coming when the one who kills you will think he is offering God service.

They will do these things because they have not known the Father or me. But I have told you these things so that when their time comes, you will remember what I told you about them.

Can you think of a person who very shortly after Christ's resurrection, he went to heaven and the church started preaching the gospel?

What happened? It's God. Satan raised up somebody in a sense. You know who that was? He's going around killing Saul. Saul. I mean, right away, here's the person.

There were people doing what Jesus said was going to happen. It happened to be Saul, who later is Paul, who becomes the great apostle when he meets the Lord on the road to Damascus.

[5:31] Well, he's warning the disciples that bad things are going to come your way. It's going to get tough, perhaps. Now, we haven't probably experienced much of that.

I think some of us have experienced some of that in sort of individual people. But in our society, it's starting to show up more and more. In Finland, I just saw the article. I saw this before.

Finland, a member of parliament, has been arrested and is going to be tried because she read a verse out of the Bible. And someone considered it hate speech.

So they charged her. In England, a teacher was fired because she said that Jesus Christ is Lord. And what you're doing, some of the things that they were doing in the school was unbiblical.

That's not going to happen here. It's already happening in some places. Persecution is going to start coming. They haven't got to the point here, at least, of killing us. You go somewhere else.

[6:32] Go to Nigeria. Nigeria. Just recently, a hundred Christians were killed simply for being Christians in this village in Nigeria.

He wanted them to be forewarned. And we have a saying. If you're forewarned, you're what?

Forearmed. If you know what's coming, then you can get ready for it.

It allows you to meet it prepared. Or unfortunately, for some of us, we tend to sometimes listen to the enemy or to our old nature, and it allows us to find a way to avoid the confrontation.

Of course, that's when we might hear Jesus say this. I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before God's angels.

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before God's angels. You see, we have to make a choice. That's part of the forewarning and the forearming.

[7:46] You have to decide what you're going to do. If you're not forewarned and forearmed, and you are forewarned, then you don't know how you're going to react.

I used to tell kids when I taught them, they'd get into trouble at school, and I says, how did that work out for you? And they said, well, it didn't work too well. And I says, well, what could you have done different? And they said, I don't know. I says, how about you think about now how you're going to respond to that situation should you get in it again?

If someone confronts you and tries to bully you, what are you going to do? If you just wander into it unaware, the next thing you know, you're in a fistfight. But if you go in there prepared, you know how to deal with it.

You know what you're going to do to avoid getting in trouble, but yet not get beat up. You'll survive this situation. Same thing here. If we're Christians and we go into a situation where we're not being treated well, we're being persecuted in a sense or mistreated because of our faith, if we've got our mind already fixed how we're going to respond to that, then when we get there, it's going to be easier as opposed to getting there or not prepared, and the next thing you're going to do is you're ducking and dodging trying to find a place to hide.

How you spoke, by the way, this is not in my sermon, but how are you supposed to respond to persecution? What did Jesus say? Pray for them. Pray for them. Does everybody say, yeah, that's a good part of it.

[9:09] You better be praying, and for them particularly because they're the ones that are the problem. What did Jesus say? If someone hits you on the cheek, what should you do? Turn the other cheek.

Love your enemies. Don't retaliate. Don't turn around and try to get into a theological argument with them. They're not going to listen anyway.

They've already rejected all that. What they need to know is the love of God coming through you, the peace that passes understanding. Start, you know, Lord, let me be your instrument of peace here, even if it costs me.

Even if it costs me. Let them see you, not me. He said they were going to be put out of synagogues. We're not going to have to worry about that, but guess what? There are Christians who are being put out of churches because the churches have lost their understanding of the gospel, and they don't like people who say things that they haven't, they decided they don't think are true.

[10:17] We haven't got to the point of killing them yet. But that's what Saul was doing. He was going around with letters saying he could capture people and take them and have them executed, put them in prison.

It will happen. Back in the Soviet days in Russia, if you were a true Christian, not a member of the Orthodox Church, and you just sort of played the state religion, if you were, you could easily be, find yourself in a deadly situation.

I read a story of a young man. He had been, they had a draft, and he got drafted in the army, and he went, and he was serving, and his commander found out he was a Christian and decided that that was unacceptable in his unit.

He would not have a Christian serving in his unit. And so he brought the young man in and had him tortured. And one of the torturers was to put his feet in a freezer and freeze his feet until he recanted, and he never recanted, and he lost his feet.

But he never fought back. He didn't make a big, he just trusted the Lord that he would get through that one way or the other and come out the other side. I think of the people that get beheaded.

[11:32] How in the world do you prepare for that? How do you do that when they're going to kill you? How can you, you know, my tendency, my normal tendency is this.

I'm going to be prepared to resist. I'm not going to go easy. I had a friend that. He says, hey, come get me. They're going to get a bullet. I'm going, no, that's not, I don't think that's what the Lord would have.

He'll give you what you need at the time you need it. In fact, Jesus said this.

But when they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers and the authorities, don't worry about how you should make your defense or what you should say.

For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you must say. Trust him to be with you at that moment when it happens.

[12:28] To give you what you need to say and the peace that you need for the situation. And Jesus said to be forewarned so that you won't fall away.

Like those who thought his words were too hard and stopped following him. Remember when he said, you need to eat my flesh and drink my blood? And they said, who can do this? This is too hard.

And they left. You see, a Christian's life, despite what we would like to think, was never intended to be easy.

I know that for a fact because of the words of Christ. He said, what? Take up your cross and follow me. If they hate me, they'll hate you. If they persecuted him, they will persecute you, even if you're never nailed to a cross.

Just carrying it is difficult. It's difficult dealing with the haters, causing all kinds of difficulties for you.

[13:34] Persecution leads to trouble and loss. We're living indeed, as John Adams said, in the wilderness. And in the wilderness is where you find things that are trying to kill you. It isn't the plants, it's the animals.

If it isn't those, it's the lack of water or whatever is out there or not out there. But if we learn, but it's there in the wilderness that we learn to live by faith.

It is there in the wilderness that we learn to have our character transformed, to become more and more like Christ. We learn to live by faith, to find our strength and resources in Christ.

It's there we hear the quiet voice of the Spirit as he comforts us and guides us. It's there we eat the manna and find the streams of living water to sustain us. Now, there is good news and all this bad news.

Let me give you some. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, No trial has overcome you that is not faced by others. Now, Robert went to, where is that?

[14:45] There he is back there. Just went to Civil Air Patrol camp. Was it easy, Robert? No. I told his mom the other night, I said, you know, when I was in basic training, I woke up one day and said, this is really, really hard.

I don't know if I can do this. Then the thought popped in my mind, I was one of millions that had done this already. If they could do it, I could do it. And so here Paul says, No trial has overcome you that has not been faced by others.

You're not the first. No matter what situation you find in, you won't be the first that's been there. And God is faithful. He will not let you be tried beyond what you're able to bear.

But with the trial will also provide a way out so that you'll be able to endure it. Now, you have to realize that the way out may be the grave. But that's not so bad.

Because what? What did Paul say? There it is. To live is Christ. To die is gain. And it would mean that we would never, ever suffer again.

[15:59] Now, I got another verse. I just found this this morning. So it's not incorporated in my sermon. But I typed it out because I wanted to share it with you. This is another one by Paul. And it's, I mean, by John. It's in John 14, 1 through 3.

And it says this. Don't let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God, believe also in me. There are many dwelling places in my father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you.

Because I'm going away to make a place for you. If I go away and make a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me. So that where I am, you may be too. What's the worst thing that can happen?

You go to be with the Lord. You go to be with the Lord. That's not so bad. I mean, I'm at the point in my life where I'm ready.

Right, George? We're ready. The trouble with us is that we want to follow Christ, but we want the wilderness light version.

[16:55] To live in an RV with air conditioners and showers. And maybe even be allowed all that.

But you know what? If you get that, then you've got to remember that your reward is going to also reflect that. You have an easy life now, you're going to have a light reward in the end, I think.

If you look at what Paul said in Corinthians about that. Now, Jesus goes on to tell the disciples why he had to go away. By leaving, after the resurrection, he would send the Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit would come to convict the world or to expose the world's wrong or to prove the world wrong. Let's look at these verses. It says, Now, the word there, proved, is the Greek word, which means to prove, convict, or expose.

And then it falls with another word that means with respect to or concerning. So what he's saying is he's going to convict or expose the world to be wrong in these three areas.

[18:27] Now, we know the Spirit came when? When did the church get the Spirit? Pentecost.

He came upon them and he's been living in all Christians ever since then. And he leads us to testify to the truth of Christ. It's specifically concerning sin.

Because they reject him. They don't see what we say is sin. As sin, why? Because they don't believe that there is a God and or there is that Christ came. That he is. Concerning righteousness because he returned to the Father.

victorious over death and sin and Satan. Where's our righteousness? It's in Christ. Where is Christ? Sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Who intercedes for us. Our righteousness is him having been victorious over death. Concerning judgment because Satan has been condemned. And that's good news to us.

[19:30] It should be anyway. His fate is sealed. And guess what? We are the vessels that carry the Spirit into the world. We are the messengers of God's truth.

We are the ambassadors of the kingdom of God. It's through our lives and our testimonies, our testifying, that the Spirit will expose the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. And that doesn't mean that we have to be Bible thumpers or street preachers. Although some might be called to do that.

Not thumb Bibles, but to preach. It means that we need to live faithful, obedient lives with love for God, love for one another, and love for our enemies, whether they're seen or unseen, open and violent, or covert and passive.

We're to speak the truth and love first to one another, other than those that God puts in our lives.

We are strongholds in a hostile land. We are the fifth column, if you know what that means,

undermining the authority of the ruler of this world.

[20:35] We're sort of like God's covert special forces hiding inside the society, bringing, you know, trying to convert, in the sense of sharing the good news with other people so they can, too, be freed from sin and slavery to this world.

We're like those that run a spiritual underground railroad to rescue the slaves of sin and to bring them to the freedom of the children of God. Got it? Is that easy?

That's what it's all about. Now, here's the tough part, is to do it. You got to do it. You can know it up here, but it never gets in your hands and feet. It won't do anyone any good.

See, we see the world, we see now the truth of the world as a wilderness dimly. When we look at the world, you don't think of the world as an evil place, do you?

Normally. You go to work, you go home, you go to the grocery store, you go to the gas station, you go eat dinner with some friends, you do all this stuff. It doesn't look like an evil place. It looks like a pretty good place.

[21:39] But it's a wilderness. It's a wilderness. And sometimes it's hard to see all that when it's camouflaged by all the attractive things this world offers us, like cell phones and entertainments and houses and cars and clothes and an easy and comfortable life.

And we get distracted. We get waylaid. We get lost in the business of our days. But if we listen, if we pay attention, the spirit is there in us, prompting us to be witnesses to what we need to be.

And that's one of the reasons he was sent. And realize in a little while, we're going to see Jesus, either at his coming or our death.

Will he say, well done, good and faithful servant? Or will he hear, away with you, I never knew you.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. And your word sometimes is hard. It's really not hard, Lord, but we make it hard because we resist giving in to you and your word.

[22:51] Help us to understand that you've warned us now we need to be prepared. And one of the ways we can be prepared, Lord, I know is to pray. And we just pray now that you'll open our hearts and our minds to your spirit to listen, to learn, and to be conformed into your image.

And we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.