

Jesus and the Revelation of God

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- [0 : 0 0] St. John's Shaughnessy Church This is the Sunday you stir your Christmas pudding in preparation.
- It's Stir Up Sunday. The colic begins, Stir Up, We Veseech Thee. And the lesson begins with being stirred up when it describes, Let not your heart be troubled.
- Let not your heart be stirred up with anxiety. Now, this week I went to a musical concert where there was a brilliant pianist playing.
- It was somewhat like church. I spent my time looking around, wondering whether other people were hearing something that I wasn't.
- It was unlike church in that the musician is given rapt attention, and the music is followed by rapturous applause.
- [1 : 4 0] That doesn't happen to preachers. But there is some comfort in knowing that Jesus was a preacher and it didn't happen to him.
- And the passage we're looking at is an example of where he was greeted almost with total confusion. But I want you to look at that passage and I want you to see if we can find in it something that will sort of unravel it for us so that we can begin to see all that is there.
- The passage is desperately familiar. Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God.
- Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And on. And I've said those words at hundreds of funerals.
- And I think people heard the words, but to hear what they're saying, those words, is a very profound experience that I don't think many of us enjoy.
- [3 : 0 6] I certainly have enjoyed it this week, having to take those words that are so familiar and find out what lies behind them.
- During the course of the week, I heard a Cape Breton miner on the CBC being interviewed. And he was being interviewed because the coal mines are closing in Cape Breton.
- And the interviewer asked him, do they need to be closed? And he, from being a miner down in the mine, said, no, they don't need to be closed.
- There are seams of coal which would last for years and years and years if they chose to mine them. But they don't want the coal anymore.
- And so they've closed the mine. John 14, 1-11, has seams of great value that could take the whole of your life to explore and would provide you throughout the whole of your life with wonderful nourishment.
- [4 : 3 2] But somebody has to be interested enough to get into those seams and to dig out what is there.
- And I can only, in the time given this morning, try and start you in that process with respect to this passage of Scripture.

The way I want to do it is to break the passage down and go over it three different times. The first time I want to go through it and show you what Jesus considers the apostles' potential.

He tells them what belongs to them. Then I want to go through it and show you the problems the apostles are having with taking possession of what belongs to them.

[5 : 33] And then the third time I go through it, I want you to see what the apostles' place is. And I want you to think of Jesus talking to his apostles who are gathered around him.

And we are gathered around in a wider circle, Jesus and his apostles. And as he describes to them and to us, the place that belongs to us and the place that we belong.

Let me start by telling you that this came out of, in part, reading the passage and realizing that in the first verse of it and in the last verse of it, believe is the dominant verb, believe is the dominant verb, that Jesus refers to his father 24 times, sorry, 14 times, and he refers to himself 24 times.

So it's fascinating if you just trace what he says about the father, what he says about himself, and why he says we are to believe, to put our whole faith in him.

Now, first, let's look at the apostles' potential. They have troubled hearts, not without reason.

[7 : 20] Peter's denial has been forecast. Judas' betrayal has been forecast. The plot to kill Jesus has been revealed.

The fact of Jesus' death is impending. And that he will be gone away from them. And so, it's not surprising that they are troubled.

And it's very surprising that Jesus says, Let not your heart be troubled. It's an amazing statement.

For people who come and gather at funerals, and the first word that's read to them is, Let not your heart be troubled. It seems an exercise in futility.

At that moment when their heart's troubles are heavy as heavy can be, somebody comes along with what appears to be pious nonsense and says, Let not your heart be troubled.

[8 : 23] But Jesus means it. That in the most desperate circumstances of your life, there is reason for you to let not your heart be troubled.

Well, that's where he starts with the apostles. He says, Your faith needs to be focused in God and in me.

He says, I have told you. And, He said, What Jesus says is, I have told you.

And I think what is implied is that, not that he told them everything, because John's gospel says, If I were to tell you everything, this is the last verse of John's gospel, there just wouldn't be room to put down on paper, all that there is to know.

I met a man last weekend who sells used books, and they've got a, on the net, they have access to 30 million books.

[9 : 33] So, if it was just a matter of knowing everything, all you've got to do is read 50 books an hour for the 70 years that you live. So, the, Jesus then says, I've told you these things, and these are the things that you need to know.

And what he says is that, I have a place prepared for you. I will take you to be with me, in that place, and place appears three times, you will be, and you will be there because I am there.

So, he tells them that. He tells them, you know the way, and I think the implication is, for us, and for them, that you know the way, even though you don't know that you know.

And, I think that's what he's saying to them. There is no other way, he says. And the implication is, there is no other way to the Father, and we live in a world which says, there are many ways, many ways, consider this, and that, and the other.

You can go on endlessly, spending the whole of your life, knowing how many different ways there are, and never taking one of them. And, Jesus says, in fact, there is, one way, to the Father.

[11 : 12] Then he goes on and tells them, knowing me, and they had been with him for three years now, he says, knowing me, you know the Father.

And, you know me, you know the Father. You have seen me, you have seen the Father. Because you know, and have seen me, you know, and have seen the Father.

And he draws out the implications of that remark, which I'll tell you about in a minute. And he says, in conclusion, believe what I say, or, if you're having trouble with what I'm saying to you, look at the miracles again.

Reexamine them. And they had lived through them. They'd watched. Dead men brought to life. Blind men see. Deaf men hear. Lame men walk. Hungry people fed. They'd seen all those things, and they were left to draw their own conclusions.

And if he says, you have trouble with the words, look at the miracles again. Well, that was the potential, really, that Jesus saw in the apostles.

[12 : 33] Now, look at the problems that the apostles had. The problems are, they had troubled hearts. Because of the betrayal, the denial, the plot to kill Jesus, they had reason to have troubled hearts.

They had the problem that we don't know where you are going. Jesus said, you do know. They said, we don't know. Then they went on, and they said, how can we know?

And they are trapped, as it were, in agnosticism, as many people are today. How can we know? Well, there's no way that we can know.

That was their response to Jesus. Then he went and said to them, you are looking for and expecting another way.

And that only indicates that with regard to the way, you are lost. And he says, then the apostles complain, Jesus complains to them, you should really know me, because we've been in dialogue for three years, but you don't.

[13 : 56] And I think that's the feeling of many church people, who have been at church all of their lives. They've known Jesus since childhood.

But when it comes right down to where the rubber hits the road, they have the feeling that they don't really know him. And then Jesus says, you know the Father, in fact you know, but your problem is that you don't know that you know.

There's reason for him to say that, which I hope will come out. They were clinging to a distant and supernatural revelation.

And that was the question that Philip put to Jesus in this passage. They wanted some transcendent supernatural experience of the eternal power of a vastly distant God who deigned to break into their very immediate world and reveal himself to them as the Lord had to Moses on the mountain.

They wanted that kind of an experience. And I think Islam today has said, that's the kind of experience of God that you need. The fact of his remoteness and his greatness and his holiness and his distance.

[15 : 23] He's an infinitely remote God and we must be scrupulously obedient to him. That's the pattern. And that was the pattern the disciples wanted too.

And that's the pattern that most of us want. God to stay in his place but tell us where he is. So that was another problem that the apostles had.

They had been with Jesus a long time and he said they didn't know him. They wanted to be shown what they already had been shown. They had not fully grasped that to know Jesus was to know the Father.

They were... They didn't know him. They hadn't seen him. They hadn't heard him. They had these problems.

They thought they'd not seen him. They thought they'd not heard him. They thought they didn't know him. And Jesus makes the amazing statement if you know me you know the Father.

[16 : 33] If you have seen me you have seen the Father. If you have heard me you heard the Father. See that's...

That's why we want people to accept Jesus into their hearts. Because that's the way they come to know the Father to see the Father to hear the Father.

And they were having trouble with that. So then I want you to look at what the apostles' place was.

And the apostles' place we're told is my Father's house. that is your destination. That is the place that you are journeying towards.

My Father's house. That's the place where you belong and there is there a place that belongs to you. So that's the apostles' place. If there was anything more about it that you need to know I would have told you.

[17 : 44] my going before you is only to prepare that place for you. And I assure you that having gone there to prepare that place I will come back.

And Jesus comes back to us in the resurrection. Jesus comes back to us in the feast of Pentecost the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus comes back to us when we are met as a church with the promise of his presence. Jesus comes back to us at our death.

Jesus comes back to us in his second coming. And Jesus will come back in the end of history. So he says to them I will come back.

And my function will be to take you to that place where you belong. Where I am you will be. And when they question him as to how you get there he says I am the way.

[18 : 58] I mean that's a wonderfully astute statement you see. It's how do you get from here to some place in the remote back woods of British Columbia and somebody wants to draw you a map but then somebody else says no come with me and I will take you there.

And that's what Jesus says. So that our job is not to know the way but to continue with Jesus and we will be brought along the way to the place we are meant to be.

And he says that way is marked by two things. It's marked by truth and it's marked by life. Now this is significant for us in this particular culture and in this particular time because we claim we don't know the way and we doubt if there is one.

We don't know the truth and we doubt if there is any. We don't know life death is our finality.

And Jesus says I am the way I am the truth I am the life. And then he goes on to say the thing which is so repulsive to the world we live in I am the way and no one comes to the Father but by me.

[20 : 48] I think we need to be careful as Christians with that statement and not to hit people in the face with it necessarily because when Jesus says that I don't think we have any idea of all that is meant by that.

I think that is way beyond us. We may not know all that is meant by it but we do know personally what is meant by it. That he is the only way to the Father.

The place where we are meant to be in the Father's presence he is the only way to get there. It is through faith in him. Well then he continues with them and he says you get there because to know me is to know my Father to see me is to see my Father to believe in God is to believe in me to hear my words is to hear my Father's words.

What I do the Father is doing you know that I'm doing it but it is the Father who is in fact doing it. And then he says to them if after all this you still don't understand what I'm saying review the miracles.

Go back and read them again. Read the things that you have seen. Recall the things that you have observed and then come again and consider whether if not for my words at least for my works you can believe me.

[22 : 35] And I'm sure that that's what our life is meant to be. It's meant to be a combination of both hearing his words and seeing his works.

And becoming sufficiently sensitive in the circumstances of your own personal life that not only have you the intellectual capacity to hear his words but you have the discernment to see what he's doing in the world in which you live.

I'll just take this minute to give you this illustration that I ran into this week. My friend the anthropologist whom I've mentioned before says that our particular time in history and the particular circumstance in history that marks our generation is that we are deeply concerned for victims.

And he said that's never been true in history before. He says this as an anthropologist. It's never happened that people and nations are deeply concerned for victims.

It may be hypocritical at times and it may be more in the show than in the reality but he said there is an underlying concern for victims that has pervaded the whole of our society of our civilization so that American planes are going over and dropping food hampers and bombs at the same time.

[24 : 37] Bombs because they have centuries of experience in doing that but food hampers because they've become aware of the needs of other human beings and my friend the anthropologist says that's because of Jesus Christ he's the only one that that idea has come from and he said though nobody would acknowledge it it's an underlying reality of our world I don't know whether you're interested in that or not but it was fascinating to me to read about well let me conclude by saying this this passage I think is for us and I think the reason it's read at funerals is that it's a kind of reality check where we are in the sight of Christ where we are in the reality of our own life and where we are going to where we are on the way to going to the place that we are meant to arrive those three things and you need to check your reality and I hope that the purpose that you're here in church and the purpose for which you kneel and pray is that you may check your reality in the light of

God's purpose towards you in Jesus Christ and that as you know Jesus you will know the Father as you see Jesus you will see the Father as you hear Jesus you will hear the Father as you come to the place which is the Father's house where you are meant to be Jesus will be there with you that's to be our reality by the grace and mercy of God in my Father's house are many mansions if it were not so I would have told you I go to prepare a place for you and if I go I will come again and receive you unto myself that's the immense reality that we need to touch the hem of the garment we need to come in touch with that reality and I pray that in this service you may do a check of your reality in the light of this passage and that you may touch the reality which is the place you're meant to be

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