

John 14:25-31

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[0:00] Let's pray together as we stand. O Lord, giver of life, we have hard hearts, but I pray by your word,!

that we would see and hear your love for us, and we would respond with love and obedience. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

You can be seated. When I started high school, I was really passionate about my faith.

I went to public school at Point Grey. Go Greyhounds! Which was 20 blocks west of here. None of my friends from elementary school went to Point Grey with me.

So I started high school not knowing anybody. But I quickly became good friends with both the nicest and nerdiest guy you could imagine.

[1:10] And this will be a bit of a shock, but I was pretty nice and pretty nerdy back then myself. So our friendship worked quite well. My new best friend was not religious.

And so I took it upon myself to make him a Christian. My strategy was to argue him to faith. To debate him into submission.

One day we went for a really long walk around his neighborhood discussing Christianity. And after a few hours, to my horror, I realized his arguments against my faith were stronger than my self-conceived arguments for it.

I lost the debate. His main point was really simple. If God is invisible, if he's absent from the world, then it's impossible to ever know if he exists.

How can you know God if you can't see God? It felt a bit like Humpty Dumpty falling from faith and crashing down into an agnostic abyss.

[2:20] My dad picked me up that night and he asked me how my time was. And wounded, having this existential crisis, I decided to be honest with him.

And so I asked my father, how do we know that God is real? Especially that our God is the real God if we can't see him.

And my dad answered simply, well, we know our God is the real God because he sent his son. And people saw Jesus.

My father's simple answer put me back together again. This conversation in my life echoes the discussion Jesus was having with his disciples in John chapter 14, the night before he was killed. It's on page 901 of the Bible in front of you and it would be really helpful if you went there now. One of Jesus' 12 students or apprentices, Philip, asks in verse 8, Lord, show us the Father.

[3:35] And that would be enough for us. Jesus, show us God the Father and then we'll believe. It's my friend's question, isn't it?

How can you believe in an invisible God? Jesus, show us God. Jesus answers Philip exactly the same way my dad answered me.

In verse 9, Jesus says, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. God is not invisible. God has made himself visible by sending us his Son.

In our passage today, a few verses later, another disciple now asks a follow-up question. Look at verse 22. Lord, how is it that you manifest yourself to us and not to the world?

In other words, Jesus, how is it that we can see who you really are but the rest of the world doesn't?

[4:43] How is it that people can look right at you and not see God? Jesus is doing miracles, he's raising dead people, like, how do people not get it?

How is it that you can bring God's kingdom to earth and so many people miss it? That is the question of our passage. And Jesus' answer is not at all what you expect.

Jesus' response is this. He says, the world will see that I am the Lord because God will make his home in my followers. The world will see that Jesus is Lord by seeing God alive and at work in his people.

We see Christ when we see Christians living out God's love. And this passage explains to us how that all works.

Look at verse 23. Jesus says, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him and we will come and make our home with him.

[5:56] It's a big verse. I'm going to break it in half. First, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word. Love for Jesus is shown in obedience to Jesus' teaching, his word.

So, Jesus is not a tyrant demanding blind obedience. He's inviting us into relationship. We obey Jesus not out of fear but out of love.

We listen to him because we love him. We trust him. Obedience is not about earning God's approval. It's the fruit of love.

And to love God is to listen to his son. Now, Jesus himself models this for us in real life. Look at verse 31, the end of our passage.

Jesus says, I do as the Father commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father. Jesus is about to go to the cross.

[7:00] It's hours away. And he knows this. We're told in chapter 13, the Father has given all things into his hands. He's in total control of this situation.

Jesus will not die because the devil has overpowered him. not because the events spiral out of his control, but because he loves the Father and he trusts him completely.

Jesus' obedience reveals his love. The cross for us reflects the Father's love for the world, but it also reveals the Son's love for the Father.

Jesus obeys God not out of duty, not under compulsion, not to earn his approval. Jesus obeys his Father because he loves his Father. And Jesus invites us into that same pattern of love.

We show we love God by listening to his Son. And when we love God by listening to his Son, his word, hear what happens in the second half of verse 23.

[8:07] we're told, my Father will love him and he will come and we will come and make our home with him. Right at the beginning of John chapter 14, the chapter we're in, do you remember that Jesus tells his disciples that he goes to the Father to prepare a dwelling place for them?

Well, now Jesus tells us something even more astonishing. If anyone loves me, he'll keep my word, the Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him.

Jesus is promising at the beginning and the end of chapter 14 that God's home and our home will no longer be separate. As we love Jesus and listen to him, the Father and the Son come to dwell in us.

We become God's home. Now back then, God's people were waiting for the day when God would return to his people. Jesus is saying that day has come.

But God will no longer dwell in a building. God now dwells in a people. God makes his home in those who hear Jesus' words and respond in love and in obedience.

[9:27] Christians. Christianity is not about escaping the world. It's about God moving into it by moving into his people. Our faith is not about how to float up to heaven when we die.

It's about knowing God now. It's about experiencing the God of the universe making his home within you. Do you remember my high school friend?

His dad once told him Christianity is the most brilliant lie because everything it promises you you don't receive until you die. Jesus says that is simply not true.

God gives himself now. I grew up in a Christian home and I was brought to church every week by my parents and I never doubted the Christian story but I also didn't see it as important in my life.

In grade seven a year before my disastrous debate with my friend my dad took a sabbatical in Oxford England and my mom my sister and I went with him to live there for six months.

[10:38] And what I found in Oxford is that all of my worldly Canadian comforts disappeared in an instant. And all of a sudden I couldn't

connect with my peers.

They liked different things over there and I struggled to have any friends. You know they played this weird game called rugby and no one seemed to have ever heard about road hockey.

School was way more difficult. So that year I felt alone and different frankly kind of dumb. We lived next door to our parish church literally next door.

I waved at the ministers from our kitchen table. It's called St. Andrew's and when my parents heard the curate was offering a catechism class they signed me up. And I remember going to this young man's stone cottage picture bag end from *The Hobbit* and we had religious chats over tea.

And for the first time in my life as I heard the words of Jesus I listened to them. My life in Oxford was pretty empty. There were no comforts, no distractions to keep me from focusing for the first time on what Jesus said.

[11:55] And at the end of our time there I was confirmed. There was a service on a Sunday night, the bishop came to our parish and everyone in the catechism class declared publicly that they accepted Jesus, they believed his gospel, and then the bishop put his hands on each of us and prayed that we would receive God's Holy Spirit.

And much to my surprise, I did. I felt God's Spirit upon me. It was really unexpected.

I remember feeling that night tangibly like God himself, God the Holy Spirit, was alive in me. God had made his home in me. It felt a bit like I'd swallowed fire.

I was burning with joy and gratefulness and passion and love for God and for what he'd done for me. Now that is not everyone's experience. You may be a Christian and you have the Holy Spirit in you and you have never felt anything like I felt that night.

and that is okay. Because an emotional experience is not the primary thing the Holy Spirit comes to give us. The spiritual high I had that night did not last.

[13:11] But what did remain was a desire to listen to Jesus and to live out my life out of love for him. And that hasn't faded. God makes his home in those who hear Jesus' words and respond in love.

And when God makes his home in us, Jesus says we receive two gifts. First, we receive God the Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 26. Jesus says, the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring you to remembrance all that I have said to you.

Now, Jesus is speaking to the apostles here. And he's telling them that the Holy Spirit will teach them and help them to understand all that Jesus had told them and to remember all that Jesus had said so that they could write it down and pass Jesus' words on to the rest of the world.

But the promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the apostles. Jesus promises God the Father will send the Holy Spirit to everyone who loves him and listens to him and puts their trust in him.

[14:28] And this means the same Spirit who dwells in Jesus now dwells in us. Now, notice what Jesus emphasizes here. The work of the Spirit is primarily not dramatic experiences of miraculous power.

Now, of course, God can and does work through miracles, but the primary work of the Spirit is to point us to Jesus. Jesus. The Spirit helps us to know Jesus, to love him, to remember his words and to live them out.

And this is how we recognize the Spirit at work in a person's life. It's a growing love for Jesus, a desire to listen to his word, and a hunger to live life his way.

God does not leave us to follow Jesus on our own. He gives us himself to dwell within us. The second gift of Jesus is found in verse 27.

We'll finish with this. Peace I leave with you, and my peace I give you. Jesus gives us his peace.

[15:38] It's hard to define peace in English without just saying it's the opposite of violence. But peace does not mean the absence of trouble.

Remember, Jesus says this to the disciples right before his death. In the Bible, peace is not circumstantial. It's relational. Peace means the presence of God.

Jesus is telling us, you can know peace today. Not because your life is easy, but because God is with you. Now, humanity as a whole has rejected God.

We've cast him out of our lives. We have stone hearts. We've decided we can choose what's right and wrong on our own terms without listening to God. And the result is a world that is full of fear and

conflict and death.

And into this world of darkness, Jesus comes and he says, my peace I give to you. I gift you presence with God, forgiveness, restoration, new life.

[16:50] Jesus, our advocate, our helper, has come to make peace between us and God. He has come to make a way, to take away our sin so that we might live.

He's come to bring the presence of God into our lives. Jesus comes from heaven, from God, into our mess, into this dark world, into death.

And he brings light and love and mercy and grace and goodness. He comes to a world that is declared war on God and he says to us, my peace I give to you.

I forgive you all your evil. I take all your punishment. I create the way for peace with God and man. Peace be with you.

What a gift. whoever you are this morning in that pew or watching from home, Jesus comes to you today and he offers you peace.

[18:03] Do you want to be made right with God? Jesus is the way. He's done everything that needs to be done to establish peace between us and God.

All we need to do is trust and to receive the peace that he gives. In the Bible the word peace, shalom, means a flourishing life.

So Jesus comes and offers us life to the full. He's saying my life to the full I leave with you. A flourishing life, an abundant life, a never ending, always extending life I share with you.

A life that the world does not know and cannot give. My life I give to you. My very spirit will now be alive in you.

It's 25 years since my disastrous high school debate and I finally know what I should have said. Christianity is not about believing in an invisible God.

[19:12] It is about knowing the God who has come near. God has given us his son. He has given us his spirit. He has gifted us his peace.

He comes to make his home in us. You know, not someday over the rainbow. Not when you die. But today. Right now.

Why doesn't the whole world see that Jesus is the Lord? Lord. Because God is revealed as he dwells in his people. If we love God, we listen to his son.

As we listen, God makes his home in us. God gives us his peace. And God gives us his spirit. And now, full of God together, we make Christ visible to the world.

Amen.