

The Gift Of His Departure

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[0 : 01] Amen. Thank you, Treg. Please take your Bibles and open them up to John chapter 14. John chapter 14 this morning. Our passage is going to be chapter 14, verses 1 through 14.

If you didn't bring your own Bible, that's okay. We provide those for you in the seat backs in front of you. And if you don't have a Bible at all, you can take that Bible home with you as our gift to you. But we do ask that you open up God's Word because we'll be reading from here John chapter 14, verses 1 through 14.

And when you found it there in your Bible, if you would stand in honor of God's Word as I read. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God, believe also 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. And you know the way to where I am going.

[1 : 14] Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, 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 also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.

Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father?

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 does his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

[2 : 18] And greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 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. This is the holy word of God. If you would be seated as we pray once more. Lord, as we open up your word, we ask, Father, in the name of Christ, would you show us your glory?

Point us, point our attention, point our hearts to the goodness and the worthiness of Christ, and lead us to worship you, we pray. In Christ's name. Amen. Well, somehow, as you can see, it is Christmas time.

Which means Christmas music is on the radio. Houses and churches are being decorated, set up for Christmas. All the preparations are being made. Many of you are preparing, like I am, to go and visit family for the holiday season.

But we know as Christians, this Advent season, Christmas season, is preparation for the coming of King Jesus. It's about his birth, and it's about his coming again.

[3 : 28] And so we take our time, during this Advent season, to prepare our hearts to worship the coming King. Well, this year, over the next four weeks, these four Sundays of Advent, what I want us to focus on is four gifts from God to his people.

Y'all thought we might pause from the Gospel of John, but as we look through the Gospel of John and where we were in this book, I realized, really, there's no good reason to stop. These are four good gifts from God to his people.

So each Advent Sunday, we'll see another gift from Jesus to his followers. These are good gifts to you, believer. But this week, here in John 14, the gift is a little bit peculiar.

As we prepare ourselves for his coming, this week, we're celebrating the gift of his leaving. It's the gift of his departure. John, throughout the Gospel of John, he's been telling us that after years and years and years of waiting, years of anticipating, years of longing for the Messiah to come, he has finally come.

He's been born in the stable. The Word has become flesh. He's dwelt among us. He's born as a baby there in Bethlehem. He grows up. John demonstrates his ministry there among his disciples, all of the signs, all of the miracles, all of the teaching.

[4 : 53] He's finally here. The Messiah has finally come. And now he says, I'm leaving. What kind of gift is that?

What good can possibly come from the departure of Christ? How is his departure a gift to us? Well, I want to show us three ways this morning from this chapter in John 14.

Three ways his leaving is a gift to us. This will be our outline this morning. If you're taking notes, I think that that helps you to follow along. Three ways Jesus' departure is a gift to us.

First, we see that his leaving secures our coming. His leaving secures our coming.

Look there with me to verse 1, chapter 14. Jesus is preparing for his final march to the cross. He's preparing to suffer. He's preparing to be humiliated.

[5 : 54] He's preparing ultimately to die. And yet look what he does. He turns to his disciples and he comforts them. Look there to what he says in verse 1.

He says, Let not your hearts be troubled. He comforts them. He assures them that his leaving is with purpose. It's for their good. He says he's not taking something away from them.

In fact, his departure is giving them something wonderful. He comforts them with a three-fold promise here. Look with me starting to verse 2.

He says, First, In my father's house, there are many rooms. You know, when I lived in North Myrtle Beach, I got to know a man by the name of Gene.

And I would lead a men's Bible study there at Bolino's on the corner right by Cherry Grove Beach, if y'all know where that is. And Gene would come and you could tell that he was growing, he was learning, that he was there every single week.

[6 : 50] But it didn't matter what text we were studying, didn't matter what topic we were discussing, every single week, Gene asked the same question. He said, Jonathan, what does it mean that in my father's house are many rooms?

And what do those rooms look like? What can I expect when I get there? What are the accommodations there in glory? Every week he would ask that question. And so I really ought to have a better answer for you.

But sadly, I'm sorry to say, I can't tell you exactly what these rooms look like. But I can tell you, I don't think the point of this promise is for us to worry about the accommodations.

Some translations, you know, they say, in my father's house are many mansions. We've all heard the old hymns, Elvis Presley saying, I've got a mansion down over the hilltop.

And there's some really interesting, in my opinion, really interesting history there of why some versions say mansions, other versions say houses, other versions say rooms, rather, excuse me. And I read up on that.

[7 : 55] I got my argument all together, the description, I had the explanation fully ready to give to you why I prefer the translation rooms to houses. And then I shared all of that with somebody who's much, much wiser than I am.

And she said, really, I don't need to know all of this. So I'll spare you. And she was right. You know, the point is not for us to argue about accommodations, mansions against rooms, whatever that room might look like.

Jesus is assuring his disciples and he's assuring you, he's assuring us, believer, that there is room enough for you in the house of God.

That is an astounding promise, is it not? That there is room in the Father's house. And what a comfort that is to know that no matter what happens to us here, no matter what loss we may endure here, no matter what suffering we may endure here, no matter what tragedy we may endure here, no matter what may be taken from us here, this promise cannot be taken from you.

There is room in the Father's house. Not only that, Jesus says, second part of this promise here, he says, I'm leaving now to go and prepare your place.

[9 : 13] And this is the beauty of the second part of the promise. Jesus isn't just leaving, he says in verse 2, that he goes to prepare a place for his disciples.

You know, my brother Gene wound up, he died a couple years ago. And as I heard the news of his passing and as I went to his funeral, this verse was all I could think about.

And I will never read this verse again without thinking of Gene and him asking me this question every single week. What are those rooms like? I don't know exactly what Gene saw when he entered into glory, but I know because of Jesus' words right here, this promise to him and to us that he found a place prepared just for him.

There's room in the house of God for him. You know, ironically, this is the opposite of the Christmas story, isn't it? And we know the Christmas story. Jesus, the Son of God, became man.

He entered into the womb of the Virgin Mary. The time came for her to give birth. And what happened? There was no room for him, for her, in the end.

[10 : 28] Before he was even born, he was turned away. He was rejected. There was no room for God in the house of man. But Jesus says here, in me, because of me, through me, through faith in me, there is room for sinners in the house of God.

That should amaze us. Jesus has left to prepare a place for sinners like us. And the best part of the promise, verse 3, he says, if I go and prepare a place for you, he says, I will come again and take you to myself that we may be where he is also.

One reason that I love this Advent season, as we've already said, is because we're not just looking backwards to the first coming of Christ. We're looking forwards to when he will come again.

And this is how the Christian life is lived. We live in between the two comings of Christ. We live with one eye towards his first coming and all that he accomplished in his perfect life, his sacrificial death, his victorious resurrection, and we look with another eye looking forwards towards his second coming.

He has promised us. He has gone to the Father to prepare our place and he will certainly come again to take us that we may be where he is also.

[11 : 53] Jesus is leaving, secures our coming. Not only this. Second, Jesus is leaving, strengthens our believing. The second reason this is a gift for us, his leaving strengthens our believing.

Look here to verses four through eleven. Jesus, here in verses four through eleven, he tells us some fundamental truths that must be believed if you and I are going to go to the Father.

See, the disciples, they had a hard time understanding exactly what Jesus was talking about. That's not unusual for them. They kind of bumble around throughout the Gospel of John.

They were often so stuck in the physical understanding of things that they just had a hard time understanding the message of what Jesus was trying to communicate to them. And so they had a problem here.

Jesus says, I'm going away. I'm going to the Father. Apparently, he's preparing a room for them somewhere, but they don't know where he's going. They don't know how to get there.

[13 : 02] They want a map. They want a destination. They want step-by-step instructions of how they might get from point A to point B. But Jesus doesn't give them that, does he? Look there to verse four.

Jesus tells them, you know the way to where I am going. But Thomas, he spoke up on behalf of the disciples and he said, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we possibly know the way?

Give us a map. Tell us how to get there. Show us where to go. What are we supposed to do? How do we get to the Father? But look what he says. Instead of giving them directions to follow, what does he do?

Jesus tells them several truths to believe. Jesus looks at him and he says, I am the way in the truth in the life.

See, in order for us to go to the Father, we must know the way. We agree with Thomas on that point. We need to know the way to the Father. We must believe what Jesus says, that he and he alone is the way.

[14 : 16] See, we need to understand that the path to God, the way to God is not simply a path for us to follow, is a person for us to know. Jesus says, you want to go to the Father?

What I'm giving you is not a step-by-step list of instructions to follow. It's not a checklist to keep. It's not a religious system to obey. I am giving you myself.

I am the way. Believe in me. Jesus, in his first coming, he didn't just simply come to give us directions that we might be familiar with the way.

He is the way. He hasn't just come to teach us the truth. He is the truth. He hasn't just come to give us eternal life. He is eternal life.

He hasn't just come that we go through him to get to the Father. When we come to him, when we come to Christ, we come to the Father. you must know the way.

[15 : 22] As we enter into this Advent season and this Christmas season, as we get so busy with all of the traditions, the festivities, all the busyness of what we all go through in the month of December, take time and pause and ask yourself, make absolutely certain, do you know the way?

Do you know Christ? Do you trust him? Do you believe him? You must know the way.

See, this is a statement of exclusivity and availability, isn't it? I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

It's exclusive and it is available. The sinners like us ought to rejoice that there is a way. There is a way to the Father for sinners like us who have earned no standing before a holy God to be welcomed.

We have been given a way. We ought to rejoice that there is a way. We ought to rejoice that there is truth in a culture, in a world where truth is constantly fluctuating, is constantly updating, what's morally acceptable, the moral compass of our culture is ebbing and flowing by the minute.

[16 : 43] It's exhausting to keep up. We ought to rejoice that there is truth. Church, we ought to rejoice that there is real, genuine life available for any sinner who would turn to Christ.

The false promises of this world, everything promises you fullness of life. Nothing comes through, nothing but Jesus. It is available for any sinner who would turn to Christ.

It is available and it is exclusive. You may have heard the phrase, the mountain has many paths.

Have you ever heard that? Apparently, it's a religious, a Hawaiian religious saying and it's meant to communicate that there's many equally valid paths to God.

And that's how our culture understands religion. It's completely inclusive. the only acceptable view is that all views are acceptable. But if we really listen to what Jesus is saying here, we don't really have that option, do we?

[17 : 50] Christianity, according to Jesus, is either the only true religion or it's a complete sham. It's either worthy of total acceptance or total rejection.

But what it can't be is just another equally valid path up the mountain. Jesus doesn't give us that option. Listen again to what he says. He says, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus says, sure, there may be many paths up the mountain, but only one path gets you up the proverbial mountain. You must come through me faith.

By faith, by believing, by receiving that Jesus and Jesus alone came to live in the place of sinners. That Jesus and Jesus alone came to die in the place of sinners.

And Jesus and Jesus alone rose from the grave. So Jesus and Jesus alone can offer eternal life to any who come to him in faith.

[18 : 59] Jesus says, to go to the Father you must come through him. How will we do that? How will we do that? He tells us, to go to the Father through him we must see the Father in him.

In other words, we must believe that Jesus is God in the flesh. That he's not just the way to God. That he is God.

That he is worthy of our worship. That he's worthy of our devotion. That he's worthy of our praise. That Jesus Christ is worthy of our life. Thomas has had his turn and now Philip gets to say his piece.

He says, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. You see what he's saying there? He's saying, Jesus, you are saying some bold things and we want to believe what you're saying.

We want to accept what you're saying. Jesus, if you would just show us God, maybe that would help just a little bit. I wonder if you ever feel that way. God, just show me.

[20 : 11] Show me a piece of who you are and maybe that would strengthen my faith. Let me see you. I'll believe that you are who you say you are. Look what Jesus says to Philip.

Jesus says to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say, I don't speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

Believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me or else believe on account of the works themselves. What is he saying? He's saying you have seen God.

You have seen enough Philip. You have seen my works. You have heard my words. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. If you know me, you know the Father.

[21 : 15] If you believe me, you believe the Father. If you worship me, you worship the Father. If you come to me, you come to the Father.

And only in me can anyone come to him. Believe in me. Believe also in God, he said in verse 1. To come to the Father, you must come to Jesus and see him for who he is.

Now, that's one thing for the disciples, isn't it? The disciples who lived and walked with Jesus, who saw him face to face, who could reach out and touch Jesus.

But what about us? 2,000 something years later, why are we gathered here worshipping this man, Jesus Christ? How can we claim to have seen him for who he is and to believe him that he is God?

Why are we here celebrating and honoring this man, Jesus Christ? I'm going to make a bold assumption about you, which is that none of us have ever seen Jesus. Meaning, none of us are 2,000 years old.

[22 : 20] None of us have physically seen Jesus. Why do we believe? We believe because by the grace of God, the message of the gospel came to us into our ears and by the spirit into our hearts.

What does Paul say in Romans? Faith comes through seeing. What does he say? Faith comes through, help me, through hearing. And hearing through the word of Christ.

See, his leaving at the completion of his work, his departing to go to be with the Father, his leaving has inaugurated the age of believing.

His leaving has inaugurated the age of spiritual seeing. His leaving has inaugurated the age of the church.

The reason why we are here in All-in-Doll, South Carolina believing that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh is because by his spirit he has opened your eyes to see it through the word.

[23 : 30] None of us has seen Jesus, but we were given eyes to see and a heart to believe that he is who he says he is. And this is what Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1.

It says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Listen to this. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him. And rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith and the salvation of your souls.

[24 : 51] Does this describe you? Though you have not seen him, you love him. Does your heart love him? Does your heart rejoice in him with joy inexpressible?

If it does, church, this is a miracle of God's grace. This is the work of the spirit to open up the eyes of those who are spiritually blind that they might see the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is his work, but also, guess what? It is now also our work, which leads us to our final benefit of his departure.

Third, his leaving supercharges our working. His leaving supercharges our working.

What is the church to do in between the two comings of Christ? We don't just sit on our hands and wait patiently for Christ's return.

[26 : 00] We don't just sit around and wait for him to come while we do nothing. No. Now, because of his departure, because he has left and ascended to go to the Father, we are empowered to do the work of God with the power of God for the glory of God.

Look there to verse 11 again. And Jesus said that one strong reason to believe that he is in the Father and the Father was in him was the works that he was doing.

Who can claim to do the works of Christ? He rose a man from the grave, Lazarus. He turned water into wine. He healed the sick. He gave sight to the blind.

The works testified that he is who he claims to be. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

See, his works, they declared and they demonstrated that he is God in the flesh. That's the purpose of the works of Christ. They were to draw attention to himself as God for the faith of his people and the glory of God.

[27 : 15] Now, guess what? He says, Christian, you get to go about the same work. Look what he says in verse 12. This ought to absolutely floor us.

He says, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me, do you believe in him? This is for you. Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

And greater works than these he will do because I am going to the Father. Because I am going to the Father.

The church is the body of Christ. Christ is the head of the church. And now, the church, because of Jesus' departure, we go about God's work of declaring and demonstrating that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Now, that work might take a thousand different manifestations. That might look a thousand different ways. The work itself is as diverse as the giftings God has given the body of Christ.

[28 : 30] It may look like praying for one another or serving one another or using our gifts to build up the body of Christ. It might look like works of ministry or works of mercy or works of evangelism.

It can look a million different ways. But the point, the aim, is the same as Jesus' work, which is to declare and to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is God.

He says, this ought to floor us, church, how in the world can our work be even greater than Christ's work? Think about this with me. His work now through us, now that he has departed, his work is now through us greater in scope than when he was here on earth.

It is no longer limited to one small area of the world. This work, this Christ-exalting God-glorifying work is now being done all over the globe.

He sent his disciples out and said, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria to the uttermost ends of the world. Go declare and demonstrate that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[29 : 46] Go and make my name known. It's greater in scope. His work now through us is also greater in clarity. We have a finished gospel.

We have the life and the death and the resurrection of Christ to believe and to proclaim. We have a complete scripture, a complete word of God to believe and to obey and to proclaim.

His work is greater in clarity now that he's gone to the Father. And because of this, now that he's departed, his work through us is greater in power to save.

You heard the verse that Dreg prayed just a moment ago. I'm not ashamed of the gospel, Paul says. For it is the power of God for the salvation of any who believe.

To the Jew first and also to the Greek. As the gospel of Jesus Christ goes forth to the ends of the earth, through the witness of the church, spiritually blind, are seeing, believing, coming to faith and coming into the kingdom.

[31 : 01] That's the story of every single Christian in this room. Somehow, in some way, by God's grace, the word of God came to you in power and you believed.

church, don't you want to be a part of that work? Don't you want to be a part of the work that God is doing in the world?

If you do, good news, he has promised you everything you need to go about the work of God. He says here, 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. Church, we ought to know this is not a blank check to ask God for whatever we want, whatever we want to do to manipulate the hand of God to fulfill our agenda.

This is a promise of power to complete the agenda of God. If we would commit ourselves to His work, we have every bit of power and provision we need to do it.

[32 : 08] If we pray in the name of Christ. Church, I invite you and I urge you to pray that God would magnify His name through us.

That this Christmas season that God would do His work through you. If you feel inadequate for that, wonderful. You're at a perfect place to ask Him to work. Would you pray that God would magnify His name through this church body?

That He would use us and speak through us and continue His work through us in ways that are beyond our greatest expectations and dreams. Don't you want to be a part of that?

Step number one is to believe it. Make certain that you know the way. Make certain that you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you do, then church, join Him in His glorious work. And this Christmas as we prepare ourselves for His coming, the birth of Emmanuel, God with us.

[33 : 12] Church, who is it that the Lord is placing on your heart that needs to hear the message of the gospel? Who is it near you within your sphere of influence that needs to hear the word of truth?

That there is a way to the Father for sinners like us. Join Him in His work. His name is Jesus. He has come and He will come again. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You that You have come. We thank You for the good news of the gospel, the promise that any who come to You will find forgiveness for their sins and will find acceptance in the house of the Father that our eternal destination is secure for those who trust in You.

and we pray, Lord, asking with confidence, not in ourselves, but in Your power, God, would You use us and work through us for Your glory? It is our desire, God, that we would be about the work of God, not in our strength, Lord, but through Your power.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.