

Jesus tells the disciples he is leaving

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 September 2017

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 0 0] on, and I'd like you to turn to the end of John chapter 13, and then we're going to read into the first part of John chapter 14. So we're going to pick it up in John chapter 13 verse 31, and we're going to finish at verse 14 of chapter 14. And one of the reasons why it's good to have God's Word in front of you when I read is so that you know I'm not making it up. It may sound strange, but I can take you to a few places where unfortunately it is. So we're going to pick it up in verse 31 of chapter 13, now hear God's Word. When he had gone out, Jesus said, now the Son of Man, now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. And if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going, you cannot come.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you. You are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterwards. Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, will you lay down your life for me?

Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow till you have denied me three times. 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 to 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. 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, 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, and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the father.

[3 : 4 2] Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the father may be glorified in the son. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it. Amen.

If you can, turn again to John 13 through into 14. As we come to John this morning, there's a few things to recognize which are not immediately recognizable, and that is that whenever we read about the disciples in Scripture, you would assume, right, that they spent more time with Jesus than they did without Jesus.

But actually, that's not strictly true, because the actual ministry of Jesus on earth was for three and a half years before his death and resurrection, and then he ascended to the Father.

Before his ministry began, there were no disciples because Jesus didn't call any. And after that period, there still were disciples, and they were on earth for a long time after Jesus had ascended to his Father, without the physical presence of Jesus.

And the reason I say that is because we now find that we have perhaps more in common with them than we first did. Because the natural assumption is the first disciples had Jesus all the time.

[5 : 0 7] The reality is they didn't have Jesus all the time. And therefore, we might even convince ourselves that it was easier for them to be a disciple because they had the physical presence of Jesus with them, when in fact, they did have the physical presence of Jesus with them, but for most

of the time, they did not.

But they were not alone. Jesus promised that when he went back to the Father, he would send the third person of the Trinity down into the hearts of his followers, the Holy Spirit.

And so we are in exactly the same position as the early disciples were, that we do not walk this earth with the physical presence of Jesus, but we do walk this earth with the presence of God in our lives, God the Holy Spirit.

So suddenly, you feel that actually, there is a uniqueness to being a disciple in the time of Jesus because they did get to see and touch and walk with Jesus. But in terms of amount of time of being a disciple on earth, they spent much more time without the physical presence of Jesus with them. And that should be an encouragement. That should be a real encouragement. Because the temptation is, of course, to always think that somebody else's life is easier, or always to think that somebody else's life is better, and then a little bit of jealousy and envy creeps in, and suddenly it doesn't take too long before we want to be somebody else in somebody else's shoes.

[6 : 41] And we probably don't really have the faintest idea of the difficulties. Peter, historically, was crucified upside down. It doesn't seem like an easy life to me.

So, in comparison, being a disciple today, we have it easy, or at least relatively easy, in comparison to being a disciple then, after the resurrection of Jesus.

But the comfort here is that we are not left alone in our discipleship. God has given us the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit. So, what we read here is that Jesus is preparing his disciples for the changeover.

He's effectively saying to his disciples, it's come that time where I'm going to leave you. By leave, he means physical presence.

I must go back to the Father, but then he says as we get into John 15, or at least the end of 14 into John 15, don't worry, I will send someone in my place, a third person of the Trinity.

[7 : 45] But what we see here is that Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. Jesus is going back to the Father, but he's going back to the Father via the cross.

And so, what begins to happen is the disciples begin to have troubled hearts. And why wouldn't you? Here you have Jesus, you're following him around. He is the one who is the Word of God, the Father.

He is able to do all these miraculous things. He can take care of you. He knows exactly what to say to you at exactly the right time. And now he's leaving. And so, you can understand the reason for troubled hearts.

And the moment Jesus recognizes that these disciples have troubled hearts, he says, chapter 14, verse 1, Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

He then goes on to say that if you have seen me, you've actually seen the Father. Not because the Father and the Son are the same person, but because the Father and the Son are God. Now, this is a little bit tricky to get your head around.

[8 : 53] The fact that there's one God in three persons. And there is no suitable illustration to illustrate it. Some people have said that the best illustration is perhaps water, ice, and steam.

But I can explain why it isn't. But then I'd have to explain the illustration in the first place. The Trinity is one of those things where God is proclaimed in his Word as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And you have to admit, at this point, your own incapacity to be able to fully appreciate what that means. And the only option you have left, which is the right one, is to simply bow down and worship.

This is our God, the triune God of Scripture. Thomas has difficulty getting his head around it at this point. But I don't know if you've read to the end of John, and you might remember what Thomas actually said when he got to see the resurrected Jesus.

He says, my Lord and my God. So suddenly he's having difficulty at this point to reconcile the two. But after the resurrection, he acknowledges Jesus as God.

[10 : 02] And that's what Jesus is doing here. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Not because we're the same person, but because we are God. So, also notice that disciples are recognizing that they are going to be left by Jesus.

And Jesus has told them that where he is going, they cannot come. So now, the reason for the troubled hearts is even more troubling. So they've been following Jesus for three and a half years, and Jesus has now got them to the point where he's telling them that he's leaving.

But not only is he telling them that he's leaving, he's telling them, you can't come with me. Where I am going, you cannot come. If you look back in chapter 13, verse 33, he says to his disciples, where I am going, you cannot come.

Well, that's troubling. And the reason they cannot come is because they have forgotten exactly where Jesus is going.

But then Jesus has to answer Thomas. Thomas says in chapter 14, you know, verse 4, you know, where I'm going, you cannot come.

[11:19] And Thomas says, well, Lord, where are you going? So, you know, how can we know the way if you've not told us the way? Jesus said, well, you can come with me later, but you can't come with me right now.

Okay, but if we don't know where you're going, how can we come? It seems like a legitimate question. And then Jesus turns around and says to him, Thomas, you know, you almost feel that Jesus is saying, Thomas, look, you should have got this by now.

Come on. You know, we've been through Sunday school together. We've been through Bible class together. I am the way. Okay? I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Don't look to me to point somewhere else. When you look at Jesus asking, where is the way, he's pointing to himself. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one, okay, no one comes to the Father except through him.

These are the most glorious words in Scripture, but they are the words that can often cause the most offense to people who think that they can actually get to God without Jesus.

[12:27] You can't get to God without Jesus. You cannot get to God when God has provided his son to get you to him by rejecting the son that God has given you.

So Jesus is saying here that no one can come to the Father except through me. They are glorious words. They are words of deep rejoicing. They are words of deep comfort because Jesus is the one person who does everything for us.

Do you know, I said last week, last Sunday evening, you know, you can be your very own failure or you can be a failure in Christ. Okay? Because we fail all the time.

And I don't mind failing now because now I'm Christ failure. I rejoice in being Christ's failure, but I would not want to be a failure all by myself.

Okay? To be a failure all by yourself is the outer darkness. Okay? Is the place of desolation, is destruction.

[13:29] Okay? So yes, we fail, but we fail in Christ who does it all for us. And that is crucial, especially for Peter, having just been told that he would lay down his life for Jesus.

I'll do everything for you. Oh, really, Peter? Because you're going to deny me three times. That's a failure. But Christ overcomes our failure.

So we can, it's safe to be a failure in Christ because if we're a failure in Christ, we are saved from those failings. Okay? Remember that. Okay?

It is safe to be a failure in Christ because when you fail in Christ, you are saved from those failings. And that's the thing to rejoice in. Peter, who denied Jesus for three times, got to the point where he expressed his love for Jesus upon questioning, but he expressed his love for Jesus in light of his failings.

But we fail Jesus, but Jesus never fails us. And that is absolutely crucial for these disciples to hear as it is for us today.

[14:36] Well, Jesus then moves on to say that when he is gone, that the disciples themselves will be able to do greater works than him. Now, these works are greater in amount, not greater in power.

And that's crucial to understand. So there are people on earth today that God has used that have brought thousands of people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, Jesus not only brought thousands to him, but he managed to make thousands disappear.

Okay? Jesus, on one occasion, had 5,000 people around him, said a few words, okay, and 4,900 and something disappeared immediately.

Okay? So when Jesus speaks, the call to follow him is a serious one. And we looked at this on one of the Sunday evenings, the two men who decided to follow Jesus but never actually followed him.

Okay? Like the five birds that sit on the telegraph wire, three deciding to fly south for the summer, how many are left? Five. Because they only made the decision.

[15 : 43] They didn't actually go. So the following of Jesus here, of being a disciple, is a serious commitment to actually following Jesus.

And what God promises here is that when Jesus is gone, he will do his work through us. And we will get to see great works in the church throughout history.

Not because we're great, but because God is great at working through us. The reason people become Christians today is because God works through Christians making people come to him. So Jesus, in summary, is leaving for the cross. He's leaving to die on the cross. That's his destination.

And that's the reason why the followers cannot follow Jesus. That where I am going, you cannot come because where I am going is the cross. Okay? Think about that for a moment.

[16 : 44] Where I am going, you cannot come because where I am going is the cross. God then promises to do the work through his disciples. And the way that he does that is by getting us to follow Jesus, calling other people to follow Jesus.

And so the whole thing is a wonderful witness to following Jesus. We are able to speak of Jesus' work in our life because we've witnessed it. And we're able to proclaim the work of Jesus for other people's lives because we know that that's what God does.

So the whole movement of this chapter here is that God continues to work through people, bringing people to Christ, making people like Christ so that more people would follow Christ.

In other words, at the very center of all of this is Jesus. Jesus. It's all about Jesus. All about Jesus. And that's just not a tagline which it has become today.

It really is all about Christ Jesus. So let's deal with this first thing then of you cannot come. So the disciples have been following Jesus for three and a half years and they're now told by Jesus that where I am going you cannot come.

[18 : 04] You can come later. You can come afterwards. But you cannot come now. And the reason why they cannot come is because the destination of Jesus is the cross.

And the cross is only something that Jesus can do. And Peter says, well I'll lay down my life for you. I'll do anything for you. And Peter seems to be one of those disciples whose mouth is probably bigger than his actual commitment at times.

And that's a failing that perhaps we all have. Yes, I can do this and I will do that and I will lay down my life for you. And then suddenly when it actually gets to the point where he's given the opportunity to lay down his life for Jesus he runs away.

And Jesus predicts his denial and that is a failure that Peter no doubt lived with but it's a failure that he lived with in the grace of God. So he didn't despair.

So Peter can't follow. Thomas can't follow. None of the other disciples cannot follow because the destination is the cross. Okay? Only Jesus can lay down his life for us.

[19 : 10] Only Jesus can save us. And when he says you can follow me afterwards he's indicating his own resurrection. In other words I'm going to be around I'm going to the cross but after that after my resurrection he doesn't use those words.

but it's clearly indicated by his statement afterwards you can follow me. That afterwards you can then follow me. After I have died on the cross for your sin after I have resurrected from the grave to give you new life after I've done all of that then you can follow because that is only something that I can do.

That is something that I will do for you but it's something that I will have to do on my own. So he's preparing his disciples for that kind of departure. I have to go and I have to go it alone.

I have to do this for you I want to do this for you but it has to be done all by me. You cannot participate in this bit. This is something that I must do for you.

And that only affirms what we learned last week that if you want to belong to God Jesus must serve you. Any person who belongs to God must be served by Jesus and must be served by Jesus in that way where he takes his own life and he lays it down as a substitute and a sacrifice to remove all sin to deal with the judgment of our sin.

[20 : 36] He does it all and here we are rejoicing knowing that when we meet God it's going to be a glorious day. No bad news. So the preparation.

Here's the thing. When Jesus gets into John 14 he's telling his disciples don't be troubled okay begin to understand what I'm saying believe in God believe also in me.

He then illustrates verse 2 in my father's house are many mansions or many rooms if it were not so I would not have told you I go to prepare a place for you.

Now this needs some explaining for the very simple reason that many people have read this passage thinking that Jesus has gone to heaven to get a room ready for us.

That Jesus has gone to heaven to somehow to his father's house to some way Hoover the carpet pull the curtains and make the bed. That I go to prepare a place for you and we think that he's up there being some kind of heavenly handmaiden.

[21 : 39] But that's not what Jesus is saying here but I can understand how you can get to that. Understand first of all that he is illustrating. He is illustrating an eternal dwelling place.

He's not even illustrating eternal life. Eternal life is assumed. If you're in eternity you have eternal life. But what he's illustrating here is the eternal dwelling place.

The place where you will be after I have saved you. The place that you have with God after you have been saved. So the illustration of the house and rooms is to illustrate a dwelling place.

An eternal dwelling place with God. And so at this point we need to slow down. We need to pay attention to what Jesus is saying or else we end up believing that Jesus is somehow as I've said in heaven Hoovering the carpets making the beds ready for air stay.

And that's clearly not what's happening here. What's happening here is Jesus is illustrating an eternal dwelling. So let me try and illustrate it for you. Imagine a person who has to stay at a hotel.

[22 : 49] Just imagine. He has to stay at this hotel. From the hotel's point of view they have to prepare the room. Okay? They have to open the curtains Hoover the carpet make the bed make sure that everything is clean.

They have to prepare the room in that way. But the person who's going to stay in that room doesn't have to do any of that kind of preparation. They do however have to pay to stay in that room.

Okay? So from the hotel's point of view they have to prepare the actual room but from the guest's point of view which is what Jesus is illustrating here is a payment has to be made to stay there.

So when Jesus says here I go to prepare a place for you he is talking about the payment that needs to be paid so that you can stay in the Father's house. And that payment is the cross.

When he says I go to prepare a place for you and it's the same place that where he is going you cannot come okay he's speaking of the cross because he cannot offer us a place in the Father's home in one breath and then in another breath say that where I am going you cannot follow.

[23 : 57] It wouldn't make any sense. The preparation that Jesus makes is not getting the room ready but paying for our stay in the room. And the way that he pays for our stay in the eternal dwelling is at the cross.

At the cross Jesus gives us that place in the eternal kingdom. He gives us that place at the Father's table. He gives us that place where God is.

We get a position in the eternal dwelling. And the reason for that I'll explain in a minute is really quite important. But understand this that the preparation that Jesus makes is a preparation that we cannot go where he is going because it is the cross.

And the preparation is getting us that payment paid to stay in that room. So notice that there's a difference here between eternal dwelling and eternal life.

And the reason for that is this is the most frightening verse I think or at least implication in the whole of scripture. That when parents give birth to a child or the mother gives birth to the child and the father has involvement of some kind you know I'm digging a hole here but you can understand I'm willing to admit that the mother does it all when the father does very little but you know in the nine or so months 40 weeks whatever it is but the point the point is is that scripture clearly indicates that the moment a child is born that child has life forever.

[25 : 31] Never ceases to exist. never ceases to exist. The child exists forever. So it's really important to understand that when you understand what Jesus is saying here because what Jesus is addressing here is where are you going to exist forever?

Not the fact that you will exist forever but rather where are you going to exist forever? Jesus dies on the cross so that we can exist with God forever rather than exist in hell and destruction forever.

Right? Because everyone who's born lives forever. Okay? Eternal life in scripture especially in John refers to the quality of life not the fact that it continues forever and ever.

It's assumed all the way through scripture that when a person is born they are alive forevermore.

Their soul continues. Forever continues. What Jesus is addressing here is where does it continue?

I go to prepare a place for you. In other words I go to die on the cross to make sure that you who will live forever will live forever in this place.

[26 : 45] Okay? This is why he illustrates the eternal dwelling not eternal life. and that is crucial because now we're beginning to understand that a person all people are around for good.

The moment they are born that's it. And there's no frightful thing to bring a child into this world knowing that. Okay? When parents get together or two people get together and they get married and then they decide you know maybe God will bless us with children that is a frightening prospect because here I am bringing five people into the world who are going to be around forever.

So covenantally towards children you can understand the weight you can understand the burden you can understand why we need to get the word of God into their lives.

Jesus is saying here that what he does the preparation that he makes and the place that he goes to make it the cross is so that you can have a place in this eternal dwelling because you're going to live forever.

Jesus is addressing where you're going to be in the future not the fact that you are going to be. The fact that you are going to be is just taken for granted. Jesus is addressing here where you will stay.

[28 : 04] So believe in God believe also in him. Thomas says to him Lord well we don't know where you're going so we get back on this point.

Jesus says verse 6 I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me. There's another way of looking at this or perhaps a slightly different way and that when Jesus says he is the way he's not giving a direction he's rather saying that he is the means by which you get from here to there.

So we don't come to Jesus and then Jesus sends us off in a direction. What Jesus is saying here is the way that a person gets from this life to a life with the Father is through me in me I am the way.

So Jesus doesn't point us in a direction and say go off and do it on your own. He's telling you to believe in him. When Jesus says I am the way it is the equivalent of when he says believe in God believe also in me.

I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me. Okay? The way that we get to God is not by believing certain things, is not by trusting certain things, we get to God by belonging to Jesus.

[29 : 26] Okay? And the way that we belong to Jesus is through grace and faith but we get to God in Christ Jesus. We don't get there by our believing, we get there by Jesus getting us there.

So every time you hear the words I am the way the truth and the life understand that Jesus is speaking about himself being the means not setting a direction. And therefore we can illustrate again or rather it is illustrated again that if we want to belong to God or the way that we get to belong to God is by Jesus serving us.

Jesus does it all. Okay? And that you would think that everyone would rejoice at that but it seems that people's hearts have enough corruption in them to balk at that.

I want to do it all by myself. You cannot do this all by yourself. This is something that only Jesus can do and he does do and so believe in God believe also in him.

As we draw this to a conclusion then hear those words with a great deal of comfort. If you have a troubled heart especially over eternity okay not just the fact that you don't know where Jesus is or where he's going or when he's coming back but if you have a troubled heart over eternity then here is the cure for that troubled heart believe in God believe also in Jesus.

[30 : 56] Okay? There is no other cure for a troubled heart other than those imperatives those commands. In fact when you listen to everything that Jesus has to say the one thing that he actually tells us to do is believe.

He tells us lots of things about the cross about preparation about him being the way but when it actually gets to what are we to do the answer is well nothing other than believe.

Believe everything that Jesus has told you. Believe in God believe also in him. Thomas says well you know show us the father it will be enough for us and Jesus says well if you've seen me you've seen the father and as I've said this is not because they're the same person but because they are the same God.

He then moves on in the later chapter to speak about the Holy Spirit and so when we believe the belief is very specific the belief is very detailed we're not just believing God in God we're believing in God the father God the son and God the Holy Spirit.

That's Christianity's historic confession that we believe in the triune God of scripture so when we believe that's what Jesus wants us to believe that if you've seen me you've seen the father and when he gets on to speak about the spirit the same thing applies that if you've seen me you've seen the father so here we have historic confessional Christianity that true belief in God is a belief in the triune God of scripture father son and Holy Spirit so when Jesus tells his disciples to believe that's what he's telling them to believe believe in me believe in God believe also in me it's the same thing here's a few considerations the disciples are soon to be left without Jesus in this world and that's going to be a strange thing for them but for us we've been used to it the moment we were saved we know that our relationship with God is experienced through prayer we know that it's experienced through the word we even know that it's experienced through the

[33 : 08] Holy Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God but we've never managed to walk this earth with Jesus the day will come when we do but until that day comes we have to live the life that God has given us to live and these disciples here are going to have to get used to that pretty quickly pretty quickly and so Jesus gives that heart of confirmation believe in God believe also in me because we've understood that in order to belong to God Jesus must serve us we can now understand what it means to come to Jesus okay we can now understand what it means to come to Jesus it means everything so here's the exhortation Jesus says believe in God great believe also in me the father and the son are one and with the spirit it makes up the trinity

I understand that's a little hard to believe but that's the belief that Jesus calls us to hear I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me believe in God Amen