

John 13.36-14.14 Sermon / COB / 01.18.15

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** We will begin at John 13.36 today, if you want to turn there in your Bible.
- Let's recall what is happening in our narrative. Jesus and his apostles were eating the Passover feast on the last night of Jesus' life. Jesus washed their feet, to demonstrate the spiritual cleansing they would receive through his crucifixion, and to demonstrate the kind of love he wanted his followers to give to each other.
 - When we left off in v.35, Jesus had just told them they must love each other as he had loved them – humbly, sacrificially, and unconditionally – and by doing this they would prove to the world that they were his true disciples.
 - We rejoin our scene to find Jesus still talking with all the apostles other than Judas Iscariot...

[Slide 2: 13.36] John 13.36 NET: Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later."

- † Jesus just gave them an important command, but for the moment they ignore it.
- I remember when my father left, when I was nine; and how hard it was to see him once or twice a year and then have to part again. His words of instruction and love in those moments would stick with me long afterward, but in those moments I was not interested, I just didn't want our time together to end, and knowing it would ate me up inside and drown out all else.
- † The apostles have fixated on what Jesus said about leaving them. They are confused and worried.
- Their conception of the Messiah is that he would deliver Israel from foreign rule and then reign over the world from Jerusalem. They do believe in him as the savior who would deliver people from sin, into a healthy relationship with God, but they don't grasp the meaning of the prophet Isaiah's "Suffering Servant," who would suffer and die for our sins.
- † For his part, Jesus knew that someday Peter would follow him by dying for the cause of the gospel and thus come to Heaven and into personal honor from God the Father. But that would be a few decades in the future. For now, Peter and the others could not follow where he was going.

[Slide 3: 13.37-38] John 13.37-38: Peter said to him, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you!" Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? I tell you the solemn truth, the rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times!"

- † As we will see, some of the other apostles were confused even about where Jesus was going. Maybe Peter understood Jesus was discussing his death. In any case, he said here that he was determined to follow Jesus anywhere, and if it were necessary he was even willing to die for Jesus.
- This is ironic, because the next day Jesus would die for Peter, not Peter for Jesus.
 - This also is revealing about Peter's impulsiveness and perhaps his lack of self-perception. Peter might be sincere, but Jesus knows Peter is still weak in faith and character. Peter would die for Christ years later, but at this point he is not prepared to follow Christ that far.

† **[Slide 4: disown]** What Jesus said in 13.38 was that before morning Peter would disown him, would deny knowing him, not just once, but three times.

- This was a rebuke to Peter's bluster, intended to stop such foolish talk. But as harsh as it probably seemed to Peter in the moment, Jesus meant this to be helpful to Peter later. When Jesus would be resurrected and again walk the Earth for forty days, he would forgive Peter for his betrayal, his denial, in that crisis moment. What Jesus said here would help Peter accept that forgiveness, for he would know that Jesus knew ahead of time that he would fail Jesus and yet Jesus would love him and forgive him anyway.
- This is proof of grace. When God chose to save you, when Jesus later died for you, when the Holy Spirit later still gave you rebirth, they already knew every sin you would commit afterward – every way you would betray your relationship with them, every way that you would turn away from God, disown Christ, refuse to yield to the Holy Spirit – yet they chose to love you and save you anyway. This helps us see that they had forgiven us even before we sinned, and thus our mistakes do not damage their love for us or our salvation from them. It helps us, as it did Peter, to understand the depth of grace and forgiveness and love Christ offers.

[Slide 5: 14.1] John 14.1: [Jesus still speaking] **“Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me.”**

† Jesus now was speaking to all eleven of them, not just Peter. Jesus knew they were confused and worried about what he was saying. We saw last week that Jesus himself was distressed about the betrayal of Judas and the evil that was afoot. But he told the apostles not to be distressed.

† **[Slide 6: believe]** Let's consider what Jesus said in the second half of this verse.

- In English, if I say “You, believe in God” or I say “You believe in God,” the verb “believe” has the same form. You see what I mean? The same is true in Greek, and there was no punctuation, so the way you would write “You must believe in God” or “You do believe in God” was exactly the same. Usually context can tell us which is meant. In this case, it is difficult to know for sure.
- **[Slide 7: variation]** We could have two commands: You must believe in God; believe also in me.
- We could have two statements: you believe in God; you believe also in me.
- We could have a statement and a command: You believe in God; believe also in me.
- We could have a command and a statement: Believe in God; you do believe also in me.

† We eliminate the last option, because it makes no sense in the context. Jesus would not have to instruct them to believe or trust in God if they had confidence in what Jesus was doing; and we know that they don't have confidence in what Jesus was doing.

- All three of the others could work in this context, but most scholars dismiss the two statement option. It could make sense: “Don't worry, since you believe in God and you believe in me.” But nobody thinks that is what Jesus was saying.
- The NASB, HCSB, and NLT go with two commands: “Don't worry; believe in God, believe also in me.” This is possible, if Jesus' main point was about faith in general.

- The NET, NIV, NKJ go with a statement and then command: “Don’t worry; you believe in God, believe also in me.” I translate it this way, so that Jesus is saying they have to trust him just like they trust God. Then the point is not only about having faith, but about having faith in Jesus as much as in God the Father, and we will see that this issue is about to come up in the dialogue.
- Whichever way you translate it, the point is the same: if they can trust Jesus, then they can trust that whatever he is doing is going to bless them. Even if he has to leave them, even if he has to die on the cross, they can take heart because they can trust that he knows what he is doing and he knows that it will benefit them.

[Slide 8: 14.2-3] John 14.2-3: [Jesus still speaking] **“There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too.”**

- † Rich Mullins had a great song about this passage, but historically there have been some misunderstandings about it, including a playful song by Eli.
 - Tyndale in the sixteenth century translated the Greek word *μονή* to say there were many “mansions” in God’s house; the KJV copied that translation, and the NKJV retains it today.
 - The early Latin translations said there were “stopping places” in God’s house. The third century theologian, Origen, inexplicably interpreted this as “stations on the road to God.”
- † These are demonstrably false interpretations. The Greek word *μονή* meant a room or a place to abide, a place to remain.
 - In this gospel, the verb form, *μένω*, is used to discuss the permanence of relationships between the Father and the Son, between God and us. Today, we will hear Jesus say the Father remains in him; we already have heard him say that believers would remain in him and he in them.
 - So Jesus was leaving to prepare permanent dwelling places for his disciples in God the Father’s house. This is why they can trust him, and this is why he has to leave them.
 - Now, it is not that Jesus is leaving to use his carpentry skills to build mansions in Heaven, it is that he must sacrificially die to prepare the way for them, to provide for their salvation and thus their dwelling place with him, whether that be in Heaven or on a renewed Earth.
- † **[Slide 9: return]** That understanding informs our interpretation of Jesus’ promise that he would come again to take them to himself. Some think of this as the rapture, but all of these apostles would die and go to Heaven before the rapture.
 - It is better to understand this to refer to the resurrection of Christ. Because of the resurrection, Jesus could return to the apostles and they could have their salvation complete, because they could believe in what he had accomplished on the cross. In that sense he came again to them, to take them to himself, to complete the preparation of their place in God’s house.
 - He also takes us to himself: we do not get to see him here, but we can experience him, have union with him, be saved by him, and be destined to live in God’s house through him.
- † One last thought before we go on. Jesus knew they were troubled, so he wanted to comfort them. Can you see how he did this? Can we discover in his methods a helpful tip about how to comfort

ourselves or others who are going through confusion, dismay, or sadness? The devotion asks you to consider these questions and contrast the method of Jesus with those of society and secular counselors. Take a look, and let God use it to build your faith and understanding.

[Slide 10: 14.4-6] John 14.4-6: [Jesus still speaking] **“And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said, “Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

- † Now we see clearly that Jesus has not been talking about going down the road to a certain place. He is talking about returning to God the Father through the process that would glorify him, with his arrest, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven.
 - When Thomas questions whether they know the way, he is still thinking of roads and places, but Jesus answers as though Thomas were questioning whether they knew the way to God. He says, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** This is another example of why it makes no sense to say Jesus was a good person, a good prophet, but not the Son of God. He either is a liar, a lunatic, or who he says he is.
- † Jesus is the truth of God because he is the supreme revelation of God as the divine Son who represents God the Father perfectly. Jesus is the life of God because he is the giver of both physical and spiritual life. We have learned all this already in this gospel.
 - Being both the truth and the life, Jesus is the way of God: only he can reconcile imperfect and sinning people with the perfect and righteous God the Father, only he can provide forgiveness and deliverance through his blood shed on the cross, as our unblemished Passover lamb.
 - God the Father has the right to choose whether to save anyone and God has the right to choose how to save anyone. The only way God has provided for forgiveness and reconciliation with himself, is to believe in his promise of salvation by grace, through faith in the identity and sacrifice of Christ. Thus nobody can come to God the Father except through faith in Jesus.
- † Our culture thinks that all religions are equal. If you go to a secular college and take a comparative religion course, that is what they will teach you. Another common belief is that everyone should find his/her own spiritual pathway. But these ideas ignore the revelation of God in scripture.
 - The Bible says that only God can provide a way for us to reconcile with him. The Bible says that God has chosen and provided one specific way.
 - The Bible says that we not only cannot do anything on our own to save ourselves and restore our relationship with God, we must accept God's way to save us and restore us.
 - The Bible reveals God's promise, God's way, starting in Genesis and developing all the way through the rest of scripture: we must believe in God's promise of grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life by believing in the content of that promise, which is to put our faith in the identity and accomplishment on the cross of Jesus.
- † That means devout Jews who believe in God the Father but never accept Jesus as the Messiah are not saved. Even considering yourself a Christian is not enough. You have to believe the truth God has revealed.
 - We learned last week that to acknowledge the authority of God the Father, we have to acknowledge the authority of the Son he sent, Christ; and to do that we acknowledge the

authority of the apostles Christ sent, which we do by acknowledging the authority of the scripture they wrote in the New Testament and affirmed in the Old Testament. All that is the revelation of God himself, and in that revelation, God declared the truth about his promise, his way, his savior, and his demand that people accept all that in faith.

- This also means the person who believes in a false Jesus or a false interpretation of the crucifixion and resurrection – like Unitarians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Masons, members of other cults, and even many Roman Catholics and Pentecostals who split their trust between the work of Christ and their own efforts – are not saved.

† **[Slide 11: Temple Mount]** I’ll tell you one of the saddest things I have ever seen. It was when we were in Jerusalem.

- There were devout Jews, crying out at the western wall of the Temple Mount, faithfully imploring God for help, sticking their prayer requests into crevices of the wall.
- And there were devout Roman Catholics, who had saved up all their lives so they could come and worship at the place where Christ was crucified.
- And there were devout Muslims, who wanted to worship the God of Abraham, but were deceived into following false revelation about him.
- Most of the people lacked faith, which was sad enough, but far more disturbing was seeing so many people who were passionate about God, but headed for Hell. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life; by God the Father’s choice, no one comes to the Father except through him.

[Slide 12: 14.7-11] John 14.7-11: [Jesus still speaking] **“If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on [or the Greek could mean “certainly”] you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content.” Jesus replied, “Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? The person who 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? [Now the Greek text indicates Jesus begins addressing all the apostles, not just Philip.] The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father residing in me performs his miraculous deeds. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, but if you do not believe me, believe because of the miraculous deeds themselves.”**

† As highly as the apostles thought of Jesus, they still did not understand that God himself was revealed in Jesus. The Son of God and God the Father enjoy unity in essence, character, and will, so to know one is to know the other; to witness Christ is to perceive the Father.

- At Christmas, I said that one of the blessings associated with the incarnation, of the divine Son of God coming to earth as the man Jesus, was that Jesus showed us the character and will of God in a way that we could understand, lived out in human life.
- If the apostles have come to authentically know Jesus, then they also know God the Father. Yet Philip’s question makes Jesus ask whether they even know Jesus, since they do not realize the revelation of God in him. They think of him as a prophet of God and as the Messiah from God, but still don’t fully grasp that he is God the Son, the perfect image of God the Father.

† This is despite Jesus teaching on the subject numerous times before. In this gospel, we have heard Jesus say that the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father, that Jesus and the Father are one.

- Jesus tells them here that these teachings come from God the Father himself, just as Jesus has told them before that he speaks only what God the Father tells him to speak.
- But if they struggle to believe his words, they should note the miraculous works God the Father has been doing through Jesus and believe what those reveal. It is not just that Jesus does miracles, but that God has been doing through Jesus specific miracles which are signs that point to the Old Testament prophetic revelation about Jesus.

[Slide 13: 14.12-14] John 14.12-14: [Jesus still speaking] **“I tell you the solemn truth [ἀμὴν ἀμὴν in Greek, truly truly, an indicator that something important is coming], the person who believes in me will perform the miraculous deeds that I am doing, and will perform greater deeds than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”**

- † Do you remember what it means to pray in Jesus’ name? Is it to pray for whatever you want and tack on the “magic” words, “in Jesus’ name”? No...
 - As we have learned before, to do something in Jesus’ name is to do something by his will, under his authority, by his direction, and for his glory. If I am really preaching in Jesus’ name, it means he wants me to preach, I am preaching in submission to him and by his leave, I am preaching as he directs me, and I am preaching for his glory instead of my own.
 - So to pray for something in Christ’s name is to ask something in unity with Christ’s will and direction for you, by his authority, and for his glory.
 - The devotion asks you to consider which of your prayers are likely to fit these criteria, because many will not. It is that your other prayers are bad, you can pray anything you like, but we should be praying at least some of the time in ways that fit these criteria.
- † In both the Old and New Testaments, there is a connection between having a heart after God and getting the desires of your heart; between pursuing God’s will and getting granted what you request.
 - Christ promised his apostles, his authorized messengers to the world, that he would empower them to do the work he was sending them to do. He wanted them to go launch a world-wide gospel movement, to carry out his gospel mission and multiply their ministry through many others as he had through them. He would empower them to do this, so that when Peter spoke the first day of the church age, three thousand people would come to faith in Christ; and when a miracle would attract thousands more people to Christ, Peter could heal a lame man.
 - Does this mean the disciples of Jesus will have an easy life? No. Peter himself would be arrested multiple times, be beaten, and die a violent death for Christ, and Peter himself would teach other believers that suffering was a part of Christian life. So if it is God’s will to glorify himself through our poverty, sickness, sadness, or other afflictions, then we will suffer and we should suffer in such a way that God is glorified.
- † Here is a Bible study tip: When Jesus switches from third person [saying “the one who”] to second person [saying “you”], it usually means he is saying something specific to the apostles. But we can connect these two thoughts of miracles and prayers to find application for ourselves.
 - If we know his will and we pray to carry it out, Christ will grant our request. We should pray in areas we know have a high probability of being in his will as revealed in scripture: pray for the

lost, pray for opportunities to share the gospel, pray to grow spiritually and to become more obedient, pray to grow in ministry skills and desire to serve others, pray for the church to thrive.

- Now you might smirk and say, “Sure, big deal, Jesus promises to give me what he wants to give me anyway,” but this is an astounding promise! If we learn to discern the Spirit’s voice and yield to his will, Christ will empower us to do amazing things! He says here we will do works that he was doing and even greater! My prayers for spontaneous hair growth might be rejected, but I can trust that Christ wants to do something amazing through me for the glory of God.

† **[Slide 14: greater deeds]** Now it is not that we ever will have power that exceeds that of Christ. It is that he wants to do even more through us than he did when here himself.

- Because he has completed his mission in the crucifixion and resurrection, he can empower us to accomplish even more for the gospel and glory of God than he did while here, because now there is clarity to the gospel promise that was building throughout time in the Old Testament revelation; and now we have complete motivation to yield to the Spirit and let him have his will with us and our lives; and now all of us in the church have the Spirit’s empowerment to reveal the truth about Jesus; so now the gospel will spread throughout the earth.
- Does this mean we will do miracles? I don’t know! Miracles and other special manifestations of the Spirit seem to burst forth widely in historical cycles, to suit God’s historical purposes, but there is nothing in scripture to rule them out and really every spiritual gift is a miraculous, supernatural work of God through us. Do you believe in this promise? Do you pray like you believe it?

† I used to have a spiritual mentor. I noticed he would always pray for us to have opportunities to share the gospel. This alarmed me. I was intimidated about sharing the gospel, afraid, even embarrassed. Can you see I was just like Peter? If I have an opportunity to share truth about Jesus, and I don’t take it, then I am denying my association with him just like Peter did. To avoid praying for that opportunity was to show I had the same weak faith as Peter, that I had the bluster – I would come to church and say I would follow Jesus – but I was not really willing to do what he asked. I didn’t pray like this because I didn’t believe Christ would work through me. And you?

Conclusion

† **[Slide 15: summary]** If we reflect on scriptural truth, we will learn the character of God, the level of his grace, and the provision and assurance of our salvation; then we will remain strong in faith and thus encouraged and comforted in the face of adversity and suffering.

- We also will come to know Jesus, to know about him, and to learn how to relate him, to know him experientially, and thus we will come to know God the Father too.
- We will grow spiritually and become equipped to teach truth and carry out the gospel mission,
- We will learn how to discern God’s will and yield to the Holy Spirit, to live, walk, and pray in the name of Jesus, so we can be a powerful tool for God, through whom God will work mightily and miraculously for his own glory.

† This is scriptural truth! Now you have to decide whether you believe it enough to act on it, so you start immersing yourself in daily Bible study, you make relationship with Christ and walking in the

light with God a priority, you pursue ministry skill development, you fully submit to Christ and yield to the Holy Spirit, and you live and pray in a way that reflects your faith in Christ and his promise.

- What will it be for you? Will you choose the path the world says is safe, pursuing your own goals and lifestyle? Or will you believe in the words and works of Christ, choosing to let him work through you, even though that will mean a different sort of life, one that is more sacrificial and humble and servant oriented?
- Let's choose to walk by faith, to submit, to yield, to let God do with us whatever he wants. Let our hope be that he will bring himself glory through us and work through us to bless others. I invite you to join this gospel movement, to become a multiplying disciple for Christ! Let's pray...