

John 16.16-17.05 Sermon / COB / 03.08.15

Introduction

- † We have a bit of a review passage today, so I thought we might indulge ourselves at the start with something mentioned but not really emphasized in the passage. In **John 17.1 NIV: Jesus “looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”** I assume Jesus did not look up with his hands by his side; if he looked with his arms spread wide or even raised above his head, what would that posture suggest to you?
 - In this prayer, Jesus offered submission to the Father’s will and made a request, but the emphasis was on glorifying or praising God the Father. Maybe he would have raised his arms to signify that praise; maybe he would have spread his hands wide to reflect praise or the request.
- † **Luke 5.16 NET: “Yet Jesus himself frequently withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.”** Why would Jesus withdraw to the wilderness to pray?
 - I suspect the main thing was to avoid distractions. In town, or even alone with his disciples, there were constant demands for his attention. But out in the wilderness, he could focus on God alone.
 - Some of us like to pray while we are doing things like driving or working, and that is not all bad, but God deserves and we need some focused time of prayer alone with God.
 - So don’t pray with your tv or radio on. Don’t interrupt your prayers to answer the phone. You probably do need to interrupt your prayers to check on your screaming child, but that shows that you have to find some time to pray when your children are asleep or out of the house. If you are not willing to focus on God, what does that say to him?
- † In **Matthew 26.39 NET: Jesus “threw himself down with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet not what I will, but what you will.”** What do you think Jesus meant to say with the posture of his face on the ground as he prayed?
 - We had a sermon a while back about the Greek verb προσκυνέω, which gets translated as “worship” in our New Testament, but which literally means to prostrate yourself before someone in an attitude of submission and dependence.
 - Jesus expressed both dependence and submission to God the Father in this prayer, and he made his body language match what he was saying.
 - If Jesus, the divine Son of God, did these things regarding prayer, should we, mere creatures, do the same?
- † Now let’s think about what we communicate to God with our postures during worship or prayer.
 - Suppose you were hoping to have a deep conversation with someone, how would you interpret their body language in these postures? 1.Big yawn; 2.Blowing bubble; 3.Expressionless with glazed eyes; 4.Petting the cat or brushing hair; 5.Giggling/talking with others; 6.Slouched with arms crossed and frown.

- Now suppose you came early to church and saw someone praying or worshipping in the following postures, how would you interpret their attitudes from their body language? 1.Arms and eyes lifted high; 2.Arms wide crying; 3.On knees with bowed head; 4.Face to ground.
- I know it does not come natural to some of you to smile while you sing or to be still when you listen or to focus for long on one thing, but we need to consider what we are expressing to God with our approach to prayer and worship and our body language during prayer and worship.
- Jesus deliberately found time and places to be alone and focused on God; I am sure he took pains not to be late for worship and always stayed after to encourage someone; and Jesus, when he prayed, made his body language reflect his heart and words. We too need to consider what we are expressing to God with our approach to prayer and worship and our body language during prayer and worship.
- You might also think about what your body language is expressing to your pastor during the sermon, since my list of funny faces for the young ladies to demonstrate was based on what I have seen on your faces during sermons! Let's pray...

† Open your Bible to John 16.16. There are no slides today, so you will want to have a Bible open.

John 16.16-22 NET: [Jesus is talking to his apostles, on his last night of life. He said:] **“In a little while you will see me no longer; again after a little while, you will see me.” Then some of his disciples said to one another, “What is the meaning of what he is saying, ‘In a little while you will not see me; again after a little while, you will see me,’ and, ‘because I am going to the Father’?” So they kept on repeating, “What is the meaning of what he says, ‘In a little while’? We do not understand what he is talking about.” Jesus could see that they wanted to ask him about these things, so he said to them, “Are you asking each other about this— that I said, ‘In a little while you will not see me; again after a little while, you will see me’? I tell you the solemn truth, you will weep and wail, but the world will rejoice; you will be sad, but your sadness will turn into joy. When a woman gives birth, she has distress because her time has come, but when her child is born, she no longer remembers the suffering because of her joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”**

- † Jesus had just finished telling them about a lot of deep stuff, ending with the topic of the persecution they would face after he was gone. You can see they are in denial. Instead of talking about the essence of his message, they are muttering about a detail they don't understand.
- Jesus said he was going to die on the cross and return to God the Father in Heaven. This confused them; they had been expecting him to establish his righteous kingdom in Israel.
 - Jesus also had prophesied about his resurrection, but they had not understood. In fact, we learn later in John 20.9 that the apostles did not fully understand about the resurrection even after the crucifixion. They would have to see Jesus resurrected to finally get it.
- † Jesus said here that due to his crucifixion, they would weep and mourn – or “weep and wail” as the NET Bible dramatically says – while the unbelieving world would rejoice. But when Jesus was resurrected, they would rejoice and have a lasting joy that nothing and nobody could damage, because at last they would understand his victory over sin, death, and evil, and have assurance of their salvation and place in God's family through faith in Christ.

- What do you think of Jesus' colorful imagery about the pregnant woman? There is a little wordplay here: the sadness of the apostles and the distress of the woman in labor are the same Greek word. Some translations try to honor that wordplay, but they do so by saying the pregnant woman has sorrow when giving birth, and that is not quite right. How many of you have given birth? Were you filled with sorrow as you approached the time of birth?
- No! The pregnant woman does have physical pain or physical distress as she enters her time of labor, but after the birth she has a lasting joy that drowns out the vividness of the pain. So it would be with the rejoicing of the apostles at Jesus' resurrection.

John 16.23-24: [Jesus continued] **“At that time you will ask me nothing. I tell you the solemn truth, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive it, so that your joy may be complete.”**

- † Do you remember what it means to pray for something in Jesus' name? This is one of those things you should try to commit to memory, because otherwise you are just pretending to use magic words when you say “in Jesus' name” at the end of your prayers. We are not trying to do magic, are we? Rather, we hope to enlist God's empowerment in our cause.
 - To pray in Jesus' name means you are praying for his will, submitted to his authority, guided by his direction, and for his glory. Will, authority, direction, glory; if you have those things right with Jesus then you can legitimately pray in his name in that situation.
- † The apostles had not yet prayed for anything in Christ's name, because he was there with them, in charge of the ministry and guiding its success. But now Jesus was leaving to return to God the Father and would send the Holy Spirit to them, so they should begin to pray in his name.
 - Earlier in this conversation [in chapters 14-15], Jesus explained that true faith in him would lead them to love him, which would lead them to obey him, which would lead them to pursue his gospel mission, which would lead them into fervent prayer “in Jesus' name” for success in that mission, which would lead them to experience answered prayer and fruitful results in ministry, which would lead them to a joy and peace that were complete.
 - Faith... love... obedience... mission... prayer... blessings. People always look for other ways to find joy and peace, but the plan of God is so simple, if only we would pursue it! Are you ready?

John 16.25-28: [Jesus continued] **“I have told you these things in obscure figures of speech; a time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in obscure figures, but will tell you plainly about the Father. At that time you will ask in my name, and I do not say that I will ask the Father on your behalf. For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered into the world, but in turn, I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”**

- † At the end here, Jesus mentions his entrance into the world through the a virgin birth and his exit through the process of crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension back to Heaven. The devotion contains some reflections on this.
 - After the resurrection, when his saving work was complete and they could understand his accomplishment, Jesus would explain everything again to them in plain language.

- † But note what he says here about prayer. One distinction between our theology and that of Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy is that we believe Jesus is the only mediator you need between you and God the Father, while the others believe you need a priest or a dead saint.
 - But here Jesus says we believers don't need even him to mediate for us when it comes to prayer, rather we can go directly to God the Father.
 - We do need Jesus to mediate for us by paying the penalty for our sins, but – because he already has paid the penalty for our sins – we can pray, even confess, directly to God the Father, because God loves us and sees us as righteous because of our faith in Christ.
- † This brings me back to thinking about our postures during prayer and worship.
 - Think about the difference between a phone call and Skype. I have always hated using the phone, because I cannot see the other person's facial expressions and body language, so I cannot tell whether they are sincere or whether I am misinterpreting their tone. Skype is better for that, isn't it? Now I can see the other people. But now I have to pay attention to my own body language, remembering to smile and sit up straight.
 - You have a FIOS/XFINITY superfast and always reliable connection to God in prayer, which is great! But if he is listening and watching you, what will he infer from your words and postures when you are praying or worshipping?
 - And you have to remember that God is always using this connection whether you are paying attention to it or not. You might go into your room alone, pull the curtains, look around and not see any microphones or camera lenses, but God is listening and watching. So what will he infer from what you say and do in your private moments? Think about that, when next you are tempted to sin; everything you do is on short-circuit video to Heaven. Hopefully God's cloud storage is more secure than what we have on Earth...

John 16.29-33: His disciples said, "Look, now you are speaking plainly and not in obscure figures of speech! Now we know that you know everything and do not need anyone to ask you anything. Because of this we believe that you have come from God." Jesus replied, "Do you now believe? Look, a time is coming– and has come– when you will be scattered, each one to his own home, and I will be left alone. Yet I am not alone, because my Father is with me. I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage– I have conquered the world."

- † The apostles thought they now understood Jesus for some reason, but that was premature. They would not really start to grasp what Jesus was saying until after the resurrection.
 - They had a good conclusion here, that Jesus came from God the Father, but they were basing it on flimsy reasoning, and they still had an immature and uninformed faith.
 - Jesus reacted by telling them it would not be only Peter who would fail to stand up for him after his arrest, they all would desert him. You might remember that earlier in this discussion, Jesus smacked down Peter by predicting he would deny Jesus three times before morning.
 - At least Peter would try to stay close after the arrest, which is what gave him those opportunities to deny knowing Christ; and John would come to witness the crucifixion; but none of them would defend Jesus or admit to their association with him.

- † They are confused and will remain confused as tragic events unfold in the next few hours. Despite their confusion, Jesus gave them all this teaching – from 13.31 to this point – on this last night of his life, so they could have peace in him. Do you remember what Jesus said earlier about peace?
 - Because we believe in the gospel, we can have assurance of relational peace with God, which should lead us to experience an inner peace as we walk by the Spirit, experience the fruit of the Spirit, and anticipate the lasting peace that will come in the final deliverance of our resurrection.
 - Even while facing affliction or oppression from demons or the unbelieving world, we can have courage and a sense of peace, because his resurrection proves that Jesus has overcome the world and the evil in it.
 - We share in his victory by knowing nothing can hurt our relational peace with God, our salvation in Christ, our connection through the Holy Spirit, so nothing ultimately can damage us; and thus we take heart and experience peace inside.

- † Over the past two weeks, we have discussed experiencing attack by demons and by unbelieving people. If we are not prepared, not spiritually healthy and mature, not intimate with God and connected to the vine of Christ, not securely in the light with God and avoiding the ways of the world, then these attacks might weaken us, weaken our faith or our walk in the light or our witness to others, and this might start with damage to our physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, relational, or financial health.
 - When we are experiencing trials in this life, we have to focus on the Father, Son, and Spirit, on the promises they have made to us and the salvation they have given us. This is why it is so important to identify key passages of scripture and then work on memorizing and reflecting upon them regularly. We have to take heart from these truths and have courage so we can endure in faith and obedience, clinging to God instead of seeking comfort in the world.
 - We should be able to experience a sense of inner peace despite our troubles, we should have a lasting hope no matter what happens in life, and we should sense a transcendent joy of life and relationship with God even when we grieve or mourn what is happening in our lives. I think many of us are not experiencing these things. If you want to talk that through, come see me.

- † That's the end of Jesus' long conversation after supper. Now he is going to pray. Today we will hear what he prayed for himself; over the next couple of weeks we will see what he prayed for believers.

John 17.1-5: When Jesus had finished saying these things, he looked upward to heaven and said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you— just as you have given him authority over all humanity, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him. Now this is eternal life— that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created."

- † Jesus knew he was about to be arrested, the first step in the process leading to his crucifixion and resurrection. The time had come. So he prayed that God the Father's will would be done, that he as the Son would be glorified by perfect obedience to the Father, in his achievement on the cross, and in his victorious resurrection, and he prayed that in all this he would bring glory to the Father also.
 - As we have learned in this gospel, God the Father gave the Son of God all authority on earth, so that the Son could give life; now Jesus said this granting of authority is the basis for the Father

glorifying the Son now so that the Son could glorify the Father: you see, only by Jesus going to the cross could the Son and the Father be glorified by making provision for people to receive deliverance to spiritual life, so they could become saved representatives of God on Earth.

- This plan of redemption – of Jesus paying our penalty on the cross – always existed as a means to bring God glory. Some people therefore say the overarching theme of the Bible is our redemption, but that is wrong in two ways: it is not about us and it is not only about our redemption. The main theme of the Bible and the universe is God's glorification: our redemption from the power and penalty of sin is just one of many ways God is glorified; and the ultimate goal is God's glorification.
- † What is this eternal spiritual life Jesus offers? He says eternal life is to know the one true God, i.e. God the Father, and to know the Son of God who was sent by the Father to be born as the human Jesus who was the Christ [or Messiah] prophesied to come from God as the deliverer or savior.
- I want to take a look at a passage in Jeremiah 31 that contains details about the New Covenant promise. Let's take a look at **Jeremiah 31.34 NET**: [In the New Covenant era] **"People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me," says the LORD. "For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done."**
 - We are not just to know about the Father and the Son, we are to know them! This is relational, experiential. This is about abundant spiritual life now, not just in heaven.
 - My perception is that some of you are missing out on this. You might know the biblical facts about God and Jesus, you might even believe those facts and have come to saving faith in Christ. But I am not sure some of you are experiencing intimacy, relationship with God, and that is why you are struggling to experience the joy, hope, and peace that he promises. If this is true for you, I want you to talk with me, because you are missing out on some fantastic blessings!

Conclusion

- † Most of this today is review; it's almost like Jesus was summarizing some key points of his discussion before he moved on to prayer.
- Most of this also is theological, but we have had several application points: praying in Jesus' name, following the path to blessing, using our broadband connection to God, finding our joy and peace in Christ, preparing ourselves for spiritual attack, and truly coming to know God intimately, relationally.
- † The devotion will help you think through these things; it contains several reflection questions to help you make sense of what Jesus is saying and how that might make a difference in how you think and live. I hope you will take a look. Let's pray...