

The Glory of The One and Only

John 14 – Home, But Not Yet / Daniel Hickinbotham / Feb. 2, 2020

CONTEXT:

At this point in the Gospel narrative, from an earthly perspective, Jesus ministry has become more and more divisive, deflated, and disappointing. The disciples thought they were going to ride the initial wave of Jesus' popularity all the way to the top of a newly liberated Israel, but they are now starting to realize that things with Jesus don't work the way everything else works.

He makes weird statements, and it has driven people off in droves. He keeps ostracizing the religious and societal elites and it's putting them all in danger. He continues to squander opportunities to capitalize on momentum with the crowd. For example, He has just come into the city to the cheers of the crowd who are ready to crown Him King and revolt against Rome, and what does He do?

Instead of delivering a Braveheart speech and rallying the passion of the crowd, He tells them He is going away and then He hides Himself from the public. Then comes Passover, the time the entire Jewish nation celebrates God defeating their oppressors... it's a perfect moment to spark a rebellion. Rather than taking a place of Kingly honor and asking for the allegiance of His crew in the coming revolution, He dresses as a slave, washes their feet, tells them He is leaving, points out that one is going to deny Him and one is going to BETRAY Him.

The man who has them convinced that He is the long-awaited Messiah, maybe even God Himself, now seems to be unraveling right before their eyes... this is where we pick it up

- Recognizing the fear gripping the spirit of His disciples, Jesus leads off his last big teaching with:
 - “Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to where I am going.”
 - He tells them not to be afraid, even though He is going away... even though their plan is crumbling...
 - Jesus commands them not to embrace the panic of the moment...
- There are times in our lives when we feel this type of panic too.

- It seems like the life we have built, or the dream we have been chasing, is starting to come apart at the seams.
- Like the disciples, we have an assumption of how things SHOULD be for us... and when it doesn't work out that way, it is confusing, and grips our hearts with fear...
 - Fear that God is absent from our circumstances
- This plague of fear isn't unique to the Christian...
 - We live in a world, and particularly a society, that is filled with confusion and persistent anxiety.
 - People are constantly seeking to quell the rising panic that grips them...
 - Our awareness of the absence of God (be it consciously or subconsciously) is experienced internally as feelings of lack, isolation, insufficiency, meaninglessness... and it pervades all humanity...
 - It's understandable, because:
- **As Humans: Our Dwelling Was Supposed to Be With God**
 - When we look at the beginning of human existence, we see our design was to dwell in a place where we had unveiled access to God. We weren't searching for our identity, we weren't panicked about security, death wasn't a thing for us. We weren't anxious for anything and we weren't experiencing purposelessness because we had a standing order from our Creator to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, to exercise His benevolent rule over all that existed.
 - But, through Adam's and Eve's disobedience and disbelief, and subsequently through our own, we experience decay, and war, and toil, and infirmity, and worry.
 - They are just symptoms of the bigger tragedy...
 - The horrible reality that we are CUT OFF from God.
 - We aren't cut off in the sense that God is no longer omnipresent, or that His common grace isn't working in our lives...
 - We have been cut off from intimate fellowship... we have been cast out of the garden...
 - And our spiritual faculties have been deadened.
 - Rather than shalom in the abiding presence of God, we experience turmoil and anxiety and absence.
- The imminent departure of their miracle working Rabbi, who they have some idea is divine, is stirring up both the immediate and the ancient anxieties of their hearts...
 - In this case, that anxiety is well founded... God is leaving them... Because:

- **In Christ: God Made His Dwelling Place With Us**
 - In response to his comforting claim of going to His Father's house to prepare a place for them, and that He Himself is making the way for them to follow, this is what we see:
 - “Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.” (John 14:8-11)
 - When Philip makes the request "Show us the Father..." He is saying.
 - Remove the veil, remove the separation, restore us back to that place of intimate nearness with what we lost.
- Jesus responds by making a mind-bending claim here:
 - If you have seen me... you have seen God the Father... Remember the prologue to this Gospel? The spectacular poem laying out exactly what this entire book is endeavoring to explain? In Verse 14 it says:
 - “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)
 - Jesus is affirming that He is the eternally existing Word, the manifest revelation of the invisible God. Jesus is Affirming His Deity.
 - There is no other way that Jews would have really heard this.
 - When Jesus says in Verse 6 "I AM the way, the truth, and the life" He is making three claims to deity in one sentence:
 - I AM - This is how God identified Himself to the people of Israel, through Moses...
 - The Way (reference to the Halakha) - The way of Torah, God's revealed Word, with all its' authoritative claims on humanity.
 - The Truth and The Life – The Proverbs tell us that the Truth and Life are the outcomes of following The Halakha.
 - Jesus is saying I AM... I am everything.
 - When people attack the validity of orthodox Christianity by saying that Jesus never claimed to be God, this passage stands in direct contradiction to them.
- He is telling them I am God, standing here in the flesh, dwelling among you: I am the end of your separation.

- This is the beauty of the Gospel when it was impossible for us to make an approach to God, God made the approach to us in the person of Jesus Christ!
- But wait, isn't Jesus getting ready to leave? Doesn't that mean we are once again going to have to suffer the disgrace and anxiety of being separated from God? Praise God, no...
- **As Christians: Our Dwelling Is With God by the Spirit**
- "...I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him..." (John 14:16-21)
 - Even though none of us have ever seen Jesus, we have a blessed assurance of the truth of our faith, which is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - *God the Father, the unique first person of the trinity, at the request and authority of God the Son, the unique second person of the Trinity, sends us God the Holy Spirit, the unique third person of the Trinity to be our counselor, comforter, and companion during the now and not yet of the Kingdom.*
 - Yes, there is season in which we have to walk by faith and not by sight... and the Holy Spirit is the promise that our faith is true and it is like this only for a season...
 - Because there is coming a time when Christ will come and all humanity will see Him together, and the glory of the Lord will cover the earth like the waters cover the seas, and His presence and reign will be so undeniable that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.
 - But that brings up a question... Why NOW are there so many who proactively deny the existence of God?
 - In the passage, the disciples ask the question this way:
 - **Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it you're going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" (John 14:22)**
 - I'm looking for that high theology, high philosophy, William Lane Craig academic debate answer to the Hiddenness of God...

- But look at the way Jesus actually responds: “Jesus answered, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. The one who doesn’t love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.” (John 14:23-24)
- Although this may seem like almost a non-answer, it actually reveals a pretty tremendous theological principle
 - Loving obedience to God's Word, works to reveal the reality of God to us. (REPEAT)
 - It works to bolster out faith, it works expand our knowledge and experience of Him.
 - BUT, The flip side of that is true as well.
 - Disobedience to God's Word works to CONCEAL the reality of God to us.
 - WLC vs Christopher Hitchens Debate EXAMPLE
 - Romans 1:18-25 makes it shockingly clear,
 - God has made Himself plain enough in the creation and in the conscience of men that we have an obligation to worship Him,
 - But our Godlessness (sinful attitude of heart) and our Unrighteousness (sinful works of our hands) serve to suppress the truth of God and replace it with a lie...
 - *This is why two people can stand on the same stage and, using the same evidence, come to two different conclusions about God... because the Holy Spirit has been given to one, who lovingly obeys, and the other is given over to the depraved desires of his heart and he worships the creation.*
 - As Craig Keener so pithily puts it:
 - "Jesus is not manifest to the World because He is revealed to those who love and obey Him, not to those who do not."
 - Our obedience brings us into a greater knowledge and experience of the Love of God and the LIFE of Christ...
- The reason we are so reluctant to talk about obedience, I think, is because we do not want to rob from or pervert the reality that "Salvation is by Grace through Faith, and NOT of works, lest any man should boast."
 - But Jesus isn't talking about the forensics or mechanisms of salvation. He is saying that the outflow of salvation is a LOVE for God, evidenced by obedience.
- Jesus is about to go to the cross and unilaterally deal with the salvation issue...
 - He is encouraging them with the benefits of that...

- Restored intimacy with God
 - Restored ability to walk in the paths of righteousness by the power of the Spirit
 - Restored peace and joy
 - Even restored purpose: re-joining God in the administration of His plan for the earth.
- In verses 12-14 He says that we will do the works that He does, even greater than he does, and that if we ask anything in His name we will get it.
 - That doesn't mean because Jesus walked on water we will get to walk on Lava or levitate and walk on air,
 - It doesn't mean that we can request a billion dollars and Ferrari and then throw an "in Jesus Name" on it and we are guaranteed to receive it..
- No, it means that as we lovingly obey Jesus, we are so transformed and caught up in His life and work, that we WILL ask for things that are actually His will and for His glory.
 - What are the greater works? Belief!
 - The greater works are seeing sinful humans trusting Christ, being restored and so filled with life that they go proclaiming the good news to other sinful human beings until the Gospel spreads like a fire across the globe.
 - This is the promised work of the spirit:
 - Bringing rebels, not just into submission, but into loving relationship with their sovereign, and launching them back out to bring in more rebels...
- The abiding presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit is a promise that:
- **In Glory: Our Dwelling Will Always Be With God**
- Look with me at Revelation 21:
 - "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4)
- Jesus is telling His disciples to not be afraid because this... this is what is coming...

- All of those anxieties I listed at the beginning of this sermon which are the manifestations of our separation from God's loving embrace, are abolished and put away forever.
 - Because God is there:
 - Never again will His glory depart from humanity, and never again will humanity be cast out of His presence.
- It is this consummate reality that Jesus is pointing towards, when He tells them:
“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your heart be troubled or fearful. You have heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens so that when it does happen you may believe. I will not talk with you much longer, because the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me.[j] On the contrary, so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do as the Father commanded me. Get up, let us leave this place.”
- Then He stands up and walks whole heartedly towards the coming fury of the cross... So that the world may know that the Son loves the Father and so that we might have a secure access to God both now and for eternity.
- So here is the question that confronts all of us today:
 - Do you believe this?
 - Have you looked to Christ in all His Glory, the Glory as the one and only Son from the Father, and put your faith in Him?
 - Does the Spirit of God so indwell you that, even though it seems as if the world is at times ripping itself to pieces, your heart is comforted because in the house of the Father there is a place prepared for you?
 - Does the love of Christ move you to radically obey God in the same way that Christ obeyed, even unto death?