

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

Marion

weekly update

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“Connecting people with Jesus Christ so all can experience his love and joy.”

John 16 is the relative end of Jesus’ “farewell discourse” to His disciples. As we’ve seen, He has been comforting, assuring, and instructing them knowing that He is about to go to the cross. After this, in chapter 17, Jesus transitions to the famous three prayers offered at the Last Supper. Fittingly, as the discourse ends, things are wrapped up in a way that casts us forward to what is about to occur, yet also reminds us that this is consistent with John’s habit of playing back and forth with what has been and what is to come in his gospel.

“I have said these things” occurs several times. It’s tempting to let this phrase limit us to referencing only the few verses that have come before it. Remember that this is one long discussion that spans several chapters, and were we to play it out in real time would cover only a matter of minutes rather than weeks as we’ve been studying it. As such, Jesus is referring back to the entire discourse, encapsulating all of the assurance, comfort, and instruction that has been laid out.

Jesus refers multiple times to returning to the Father, and even in a fashion sums up the bookends of His ministry when He says that He “came from the Father to the world, and now returns from the world to the Father”. He references this not only in and of itself, but also with regard to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can’t come until He has returned to the Father. This moment, which we might think sad for the disciples is actually said to be something they should and will be joyful about.

The Holy Spirit will do several things for the disciples. It will teach them, and help them see what is to come. I don’t suggest this means some kind of “crystal ball”, but rather give them discernment coupled with the courage to face whatever is on its way. It will reveal sin, and in this Jesus defines sin as it has appeared throughout the gospel. Sin is failing to see and accept Jesus for who He is. We equate sin often with morality, this sense is much more foundational. Our moral pinnings spring from accepting Jesus for who He is. Indeed for Christians this is both why we have an expectation for our conduct, and why Paul tells us not to worry about judging those who don’t believe. Our belief in Jesus defines this for us, while those who do not believe can’t be expected to have those same standards because they haven’t even agreed on the foundation on which those standards are built. That is to God, not us.

We see then that the Spirit will define righteousness in contrast to the world’s sensibilities because Jesus is no longer with them. At that moment, Jesus was still in the world as the dominant person of God acting in creation. The closer you were to Jesus in both proximity and relationship, the closer you were to the true and ultimate expression of God, the Spirit, the Word made flesh. When Jesus departs and the Spirit comes, we understand that Spirit to be equally and broadly spread. There is nowhere that proximity is nearer or further the access to the Spirit of God. Sometimes we associate the Spirit with our conscience. That unseen force or voice that prods us when we are about to do wrong or affirms when we are about to do right. The world over, this Spirit acts on and in us all.

The Spirit also teaches about the nature of judgement. The temptation of the world has been both condemned and overcome in Jesus. The example of love and sacrifice has been set. The Spirit will speak to this in every heart. As Hebrews tells us, the law of God will be written on every heart. As such, we have the choice to either reject or follow the lead of the Spirit. Judgement had already been rendered, now it is up to us to live into a judgement of salvation or condemnation.

This helps us understand why Jesus in this chapter bookends this portion of the discourse with warnings. At the start, He tells them that they will be kicked out of synagogues, which for them was their point of reference for worship and community of faith. Furthermore, that they will be killed and those who kill them will think they are doing God a favor. Note the language here. It isn’t they will “try to kill you” or “want to kill you”, it is “those that kill you.” As a side to this, it also helps us grasp Jesus statement that they “aren’t asking where He is going.” They have asked this very question, however in this instance, Jesus is simply using it as a device to say “I can see at this point you are too overwhelmed to even form a coherent question.” The disciples are sufficiently speechless.

At the end of the chapter, Jesus informs that that in the “world you will have trouble(or persecution)” This isn’t an if, it is a when and will. The disciples can expect to be harshly mistreated. Understanding what is to be their guiding force, the Holy Spirit, and what the Spirit will reveal sheds light on the “why” of their future predicament. A world that is comfortable going its own way and pridefully unwilling to accept even the most honest and wonderfully transformative feedback is bound to throw a fit when their hardness of heart is laid bare, consciences convicted, and shown that it and it alone is responsible for whatever good or bad consequences befall it. When the message is despised, so is the messenger.

There is also the play between the disciples confusion in the moment, and Jesus’ assurance that eventually they will understand. They don’t get it yet, but they will. He drops some cryptic hints when he tells them they will see him for a little while, then not for a little while, and then again for a little while. To be clear, this isn’t to be confused with the second coming. If it were, it would be a lie since the disciples all died before the second coming occurred. This is much more imminent, and alludes to the completion of Jesus work. They will literally see Him for another day or so. Then not for a couple days while He is in the tomb. Then again on and off from the resurrection to the ascension. Then they will truly see Him no more and the Spirit will be sent.

They think by the end of the chapter that they understand, but they don’t. Very quickly after Jesus says He will “speak plainly” to them, they turn on a dime and say “yup, now you are and we understand, confess you are Lord and you know all things,” Jesus’ response indicates they clearly do not. He questions their belief knowing and foreshadowing for them that whatever they think they know at that moment, they are off base as when He is arrested and crucified, they will scatter.

When will they finally get it? When Jesus work is complete.

They can’t get it, because they haven’t seen the fullness of what Jesus is going to accomplish. What is to come is the pain and sorrow of the crucifixion, the glory of the resurrection, and the culmination and completion when Jesus ascends and, as He puts it, “returns to the Father.” Once this happens, and we see this as the story unfolds, the disciples experience clarity and awakening. We often see even in scripture it stated that they didn’t

understand in the moment, but later it would become clear. Because all focus is to be on Jesus and His mission, it isn't until completion that He will send the Holy Spirit. To even further the disciples understanding, when the Spirit comes at Pentecost, we see a further level of boldness, understanding, and power in the now confused disciples. All of this is being laid out for them in this part of the conversation. Even if they don't get it now, they will.

Jesus sentiment that pain and suffering will turn to joy, and illustrated in the image of childbirth, may have seemed strange to them, yet is a wonderful comfort both then and now. His death and absence may seem a cause for grief and mourning. In the moment it is. Yet we are assured that this time of pain is a catalyst for something on the other end much bigger and better. Without the crucifixion there is not the relief of salvation. Without the crucifixion there isn't the glory of the resurrection and exclamation that we too will be raised. Without the ascension, there can be no advent of the Holy Spirit. All of these blessings that come on the other side of the pain make the pain seem dim by comparison. In fact, as stated in the image of childbirth, the pain fades in memory as the new life that unfolds is overwhelming in its purpose, fulfillment, and depth of joy.

I might even suggest that this isn't too far a distance from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. What is required part and parcel to redemption, the willingness to be born again. There is the pain of letting go of what has been and who we thought we should be, yet the blessing and joy of a life where the burden is light, and we have the opportunity to anticipate the Kingdom of God in the next world and experience it in our hearts here and now.

In all of this we get a window into the fullness of Jesus' ministry and a foreshadowing of the disciples coming into their own as ministers of Jesus' message and forming the early church. The completeness of Jesus ministry is all the way from baptism to ascension. Without this fullness, the disciples would continue to misunderstand all of what Jesus was imparting to them. In the completion, the disciples will be equipped in clarity, power, and direction through the Holy Spirit to carry on and spread the message of reconciliation and transformation throughout the world.

This is often true for us as well. The message of Christ is not one single thing. There are multiple layers to it. Of course there is the message of salvation. There is also the call to rebirth. There is the call to sacrifice and love. There is the call to minister to those in need. There is the call to humility. There is the call to compassion. There is the call to attend to the Holy Spirit. The completeness of this message nuances how we offer it to whom. In its fullness, these layers to the message temper one another to provide a more inspiring and compelling example for Jesus' followers to live by, and witness to pass along to those who do not yet believe.

One final note about the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While not overt, Jesus does nod to a Trinitarian sensibility. Through this gospel, He has repeatedly affirmed His authority and authenticity by noting things like He is in the Father and the Father in Him, those who have seen Him have seen the Father and those that have seen the Father have seen Him, and that all He shares is genuine because He shares nothing but what He has heard from the Father. This similar connection is passed along between Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

Now the Holy Spirit has been brought into this relationship. What is the Father's is the Son's, what is the Son's is the Spirit's. In the sense of "completeness", not only have we seen a sense of the completeness of Jesus' mission, He came from the Father and returns to the Father. We also seen a completeness in God's expression in the world. From the Father comes the Son, from the Son comes the Spirit, and this Spirit sustains us until the climax of creation when the Son returns to make all things new.



February 14, 2021

Prelude

Greeting and Announcements

Opening Prayer

Hymns

#369 Blessed Assurance

#395 Take Time To Be Holy

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Scripture

Ephesians 2: 1-10 Ephesians 4: 17-32

John 14: 21-24, John 3: 16-21

Sermon

Counterfeit Christianity:

Both/And

Holy Communion

Closing Hymn

#672 God Be With You Til We Meet Again

Benediction



Giving

Offering	\$4,620
Missions	\$90
Building Fund	\$20
Improvement	\$95
-memorials-	
Tom Catlett	\$90
Donald Daugherty	\$290

Received	\$20,931
Needed	\$24,402