

Sunday, July 5, 2020

Bible Study **John 14:11-15**

We must look at the beginning of this passage where Jesus gives us so many wonderful promises about his continued presence. Jesus begins by saying, “Let not your hearts be troubled” (v. 14:1). Why were the disciples ‘troubled’? Well, even though the Sanhedrin had tried to kill Jesus not long before, he now intends to go back to Jerusalem (*see 11:14-16*). This is troubling to them because they all know that Jesus will be walking into a town whose leaders prefer to see him killed.

Then he tells them that he is going someplace they cannot follow, that one of them will betray him, and that the strongest of them (Peter) will vehemently deny him (13:21-38). Things appear to be falling apart and they feel the peril of it all.

And so the disciples are troubled in heart. “What is going to happen to us when you go?” **Jesus then makes some wonderful promises to them (and us):** “you will have permanent fellowship with me, rest assured that everything I said and did are true, I am the only way to the Father, and I will answer your prayers.”

The first promise is of unbroken fellowship with him (14:1-3). Even though Jesus will be leaving, they (and we) will still have unhindered and unbroken fellowship with him. This word in verse 2, translated as “mansions”, “many rooms”, or “dwelling places,” is the noun form of the verb “to abide.” It represents a relationship characterized by trusting and knowing. Like the trusting and knowing that exists between Jesus and the Father. Jesus’ death and departure will not sever but will fulfill that same type of relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The ‘going’ of “I go to prepare a place for you,” is his death and resurrection. That is what prepares a place for us. That is what enables us to have unbroken fellowship with him. It is the establishment of an unfading fellowship with Jesus, that extends and “abides” even beyond death.

The second promise is of a sure and clear way to God (14:4-11). “No one comes to the Father except through me” (v. 6). Jesus is the only way to the Father. Jesus is the only way because he is the truth (the very revelation of God) and because the life of God resides in him. Jesus is not somehow away from the Father, and must find and tread the way back to him. Jesus is the way himself. It is not the case that there is some truth about the Father that Jesus must learn and then teach to us. Jesus is the truth himself. It is not the case that the Father has eternal life which he will give to the Son when the Son reaches home. Jesus is life himself.

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This is why there is absolutely no other approach to the Father. In Jesus, God became flesh. When they saw Jesus, they were looking at the Father. When they heard Jesus speak, they heard the Father. When they experienced the things that Jesus did, they were experiencing the work of the Father (vv. 7-11).

The third promise is that of power not only to sustain the believing community in the world but also to enable it to do even greater works than Jesus did (v. 12). This promise is to those who believe in Jesus (v. 12) and **pray ‘in his name’** (vv. 13-14).

The ‘you’ in verses 13-14 is plural, which implies that the promise is to the community and not simply to an individual. Also, praying **‘in Jesus’ name’** is not some formula for closing a prayer. To use Jesus’ name as authorization for one’s petitions implies that those who do so know Jesus, abide in Jesus, and make their requests from that very relationship rather than from selfish concerns and motives.

In other words, if it doesn’t fit what we know about the way Jesus lived and the things Jesus taught and the things Jesus did, then it is likely not a prayer that can truly be offered “in Jesus name”. The purpose of the one praying is not that they would be served by the answering of said requests, but “that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (v. 13).

New Testament scholar Charles Cousar explains, “These are prayers offered on behalf of the community and the community’s mission. They undergird the ‘greater works’ that the church is to perform” (v. 12). And these greater works, the community’s mission, are none other than the same mission for which Jesus was sent. In and through his followers, Jesus continues to do the work that the Father sent him to do. It is the very mission of God incarnated by Jesus, NOW incarnated by the Church because those who follow Him love him and keep his commandments (v. 15). And for this mission Jesus’ promise is, “ask me anything in my name, I will do it” (v. 14).

These promises of a permanent fellowship with Jesus, the work of and way to the Father, and the pledge that the community’s prayers will be answered are all made to comfort troubled hearts. For whatever is troubling your heart today, we have these promises. Moreover, we have His very presence and all of His resources to meet those troubles and vanquish them in the certainty that no matter what befalls us, our place in and with Jesus (vv. 2-3) is secure and can not fade or be shaken.

May your prayers in Jesus name be for the glorification of the Father in the Son. And... **“Let not your hearts be troubled” (14:1).**

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Questions For Further Reflection

John 14:1-15

Understandably, the disciples are troubled that Jesus is leaving them, but will happen because Jesus going to the Father? What comfort does Jesus offer his disciples?

How do we show that we trust (believe) God and Jesus (vv. 1, 15)?

Put 14:6-7 into your own words. What does it mean to say the Jesus is the Way? The Truth? The Life? In light of 14:6, how would you respond to someone who claimed that there are many ways to God?

Is there a link between 1:18 and 14:9? How does one help us understand the other? What evidence does Jesus give for his claims? What tone of voice do you imagine Jesus using in 14:9-14?

In what way will the church do greater things than he did (v. 12)? Are you participating in doing greater things that Jesus did? Do you think you should be? Why or why not?

Do you think the promise Jesus makes in verses 12-14 is a “blank check” for prayer requests? Why does it glorify the Father when Jesus grants prayers offered in his name (v. 13)?

How are Jesus’ followers to show love to Jesus (14:15)? What is the connection between love and obedience? Which one is evidence of the other? How necessary is it that Jesus’ followers show their love for him by being obedient to his commands (14:15, 21, 23-24)?