

THE GOSPEL OF BELIEF - Studies in John's Gospel

Part sixty-one - Sunday, October 19th, 2014, 10:00 a.m.

Teaching #1758 - Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church

THE GRACE OF JESUS IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR FAILURE

John 16:25-33 - "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. [26] In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; [27] for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. [28] I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." [29] His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! [30] Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God." [31] Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? [32] Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. [33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

There is a difficult opening to this text and a comforting closing. My title emphasizes the comforting closing, but we can't ignore Jesus' difficult words in the opening verses of this challenging text.

Let's start here. Jesus recognized His disciples had a tough time understanding some of His words. They understood what He said about mercy and kindness and marriage and divorce and being a good neighbor like the Samaritan. I don't mean they found these instructions easy to **obey**. I simply mean they at least found them possible to **understand**. But some of the things Jesus said - and said **repeatedly** - just left them in a haze. They couldn't even get the gist of Jesus' **self-description**. They were less in the dark when Jesus talked about **them** and what they ought to be **doing** than when He talked about **Himself** and what **He was going to do for them**. This was particularly true when He spoke about His **mission** from the Father and His **relationship** with the Father.

John's account is full of examples:

John 6:40-41 - "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." [41] So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

John 6:51-52 - "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." [52] The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

John 6:60 - "When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?'"

John 7:33-35 - "Jesus then said, 'I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. [34] You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.' [35] The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?'"

John 8:51-53 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." [52] The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' [53] Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"

John 10:24 - "So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'"

John 12:32-34 - "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." [33] He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. [34] So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

John 14:8-9 - "Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' [9] Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

The reason I took the time to read **eight** statements of total confusion - from both the Jews and Jesus' own disciples - is I want us all to

feel the sheer weight of the repeated mass confusion surrounding Jesus' statements about His identity and mission. People seemed unable to penetrate the mystery of Jesus' most important self-identifying declarations.

Yet **we** all understand these words with seeming ease. I don't mean everybody who hears these words **believes** them or **acknowledges** Jesus in a meaningful way. I simply mean we at least know what Jesus was talking about. These first hearers of these same words did not.

This brings us to the opening verses of our text. Here Jesus expresses **why** they hadn't been able to grasp His words. He tells them something else had to happen **first - before** they would get the mental framework to comprehend.

1) **THE WORDS OF JESUS DESCRIBING THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS REDEMPTIVE WORK CAN NEVER BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE DISCIPLES - OR THE JEWS - UNTIL AFTER THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT IS COMPLETED**

John 16:25 - "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father."

The best Jesus could do up to this point was to attempt **pictures** of what He was going to do for them in His death and resurrection. **Broken bread - Living water - Quenching of thirst - Being lifted up** - all of these were limited attempts to peak interest and create appetite.

Whenever Jesus **did** try in more direct, profound terms to talk to them of future spiritual realities He did so knowing they couldn't get their minds around them:

John 16:7-12 - "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. [8] And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: [9] concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; [10] concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; [11] concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. [12] ***"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."***

This is Jesus admitting the simple reality that they can't fully even imagine the massive **weight** of His future accomplishments on their behalf - "...**you cannot bear them now.**" And that "**now**" means **before they take place.**

You and I can read all of Jesus' remarks about His body being like **broken bread in the light of** His brutal death on the cross. And we can read that **"in Him was life" in the light of** His resurrection from the grave. We read the full meaning of Jesus' words **back into them** with the full revelation of His redemptive work - **which we also have fully explained in the completed writings of the Epistles of Paul and others.** But these first disciples were groping in the dark. They had no hard, historical events to shape the way they **imagined** Jesus' words.

But this was all going to change. Shortly they would no longer need parables and similes and images to prop up their understanding of Jesus' words. They would touch His risen body. They would watch Him ascend to the Father in heaven.

2) **WHAT WOULD BE FULLY REVEALED IN "THAT DAY" WOULD BE THE OPENING UP OF ACCESS FOR FALLEN PEOPLE TO A HOLY GOD**

They could **see** Jesus' bloody body on the cross. **Everyone** present could see that, both lovers and haters of Jesus. But what wasn't open to physical sight was **what that death would accomplish.** Something was forever changed in the way fallen people could make approach to a holy God.

That this was high in Jesus' mind is clear from His repeated emphasis on **the Father** in His carefully chosen words:

John 16:25b-28 - "...I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly **about the Father.** [26] **In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; [27] for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. [28] I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."**

Jesus' future death and resurrection is a **connecting work** to bring sinful people **to the Father.** That's the hub of these words from our Lord. People who align with Jesus in faith will find they are linked up with more than just a teacher or prophet. They will find themselves knowing and loving and talking with God Himself **as their own heavenly Father.**

Jesus is just introducing truth so robust and sublime it will take the apostolic writings of the rest of the New Testament to flesh out - **Romans 8:15-16** - "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the

Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" [16] The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...."

Jesus continues. People will pray "*in Jesus' name*"(26), but will find they reach **God as Father** through that name. Jesus died for them, to be sure, but they will learn that the Son was sent into this world by the Father (28) because they were deeply **loved by the Father, no less than the Son** (27).

There is such rich redemptive doctrine here. Jesus is reminding these disciples, in words He tells them they can't fully grasp quite yet, that it's not as though a loving Jesus steps in to rescue them from a mean God. Not at all. It's the **love of the Father** that plans redemption for a rebellious creation - "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...."

A **Triune-God** was about to accomplish a **world changing work**. And it was still in the future. No wonder these first disciples were a touch mystified.

3) THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTAND - SORT OF - AND JESUS CORRECTS THEM

John 16:29-30 - "His disciples said, 'Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! [30] Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.'"

The disciples here aren't **wrong**. It's not as though they don't love Jesus and aren't trying to understand all that's about to take place. It's not their **sincerity** that's troubling Jesus. It's their **presumption**. They don't understand as fully as they must that faith in Jesus Christ is never a **simple, one time, accomplished exercise**.

Faith in Christ Jesus as Lord isn't like voting for your favorite candidate. It's more like running a marathon - **uphill** - and **in winter**. There is always **push-back** to discipleship in this world. You never just **become** a **believer**. You must **follow** as a **disciple**.

Jesus tells us something of substance in His reminder of what **faith** and **faithfulness** is all about. The disciples are sincere in their expression of love and trust in Jesus in these verses - "Now we know...."(30).

Here's the faith lesson. They are thinking joyfully about "**now**." And Jesus is about to remind them they need to be thinking about the **future**. He doesn't mean **worrying** about the future. Not at all. But He means **considering what faith will require**. In other places He referred to this as "**counting the cost**."

Jesus had to give this very same reminder to Peter in John 13:37-38 - "Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." [38] Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, **the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.**"

Faith must go so deep it has braced itself for challenges yet unseen. This leads us to the last point. And it's full of hope:

4) TRUSTING IN JESUS WHEN YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T RELY ON YOUR OWN SUCCESS

John 16:31-33 - "Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?" [32] Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. [33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

I'm struck with the way Jesus contrasts the way they feel **right now** - "Do you now believe?"(31) - with the way they He knows they're all going to desert Him in a few hours. He tells them they will all leave Him alone to save their own skins (32).

Now comes the wonderful part. I want you to think deeply about these next words - John 16:33 - "**I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.**"

Jesus' remarks about the disciples' peace follow immediately on the heels of their predicted desertion. This is not the first time we have seen this. Jesus' blessed words, "**Let not your hearts be troubled....**"(14:1) follow immediately upon telling Peter he would deny Jesus three times (13:38).

Let this sequence of events sink in for a minute. The timing of Jesus' words matters. Jesus **predicts** their desertion upon His arrest so they will know He already had their future failure in mind when He told them to be at peace because He had **"overcome the world"(33)**.

Imagine the comfort that would come upon later reflection - perhaps even as John much later on recorded his account - that in those moments when they found it hard to forgive themselves for forsaking Jesus at His loneliest moment - imagine the comfort Jesus afforded them in the reminder that the peace He promised didn't rest on **their** strength, but on **His** accomplishment.

"I have said these things to you - about your future weakness and abandonment - so that in me you may still have peace. You will certainly never have it in your own track record. Your own history may be dark and full of failure. But your peace isn't attached to those things. You can still have peace in me!"

Jesus is clear here. He **tells them** about their future failure so they will know He never **did** want them to bank on their own success. That's not what they were to stand on for hope in this world. It's what **He** did - **"I have overcome the world"(33)**.

Be very careful how you secure your heart. Learn deeply and savor regularly the magnificence of Christ's finished work. There is no other source of constant consolation in this world. It certainly won't be found in your own strength or accomplishment. Keep looking to Jesus. He's the author and finisher of our faith.