Sunday, May 9, 2021

This is the seventh in a series of sermons on John 13-17 ("The Farewell Discourse").

- 1. <u>Jesus Loves His own (13:1)</u> [7/5/2020]
- 2. Foot Washing (13:2-17) [8/30/2020]
- 3. Identifying the Traitor (13:18-30) [10/18/2020]
- 4. Christ's Glory and How We Are To Live In His Temporary Absence (13:31-38) [12/6/2020]
- 5. <u>Preparing a Place</u> (14:1-4) [1/31/2021]
- 6. The Only Way to the Father (14:5-7) [3/21/2021]
- 7. Seeing God (14:8-14)
- 8. Peace and Comfort (14:15-27)
- 9. Loving God (14:28-31)
- 10. Abiding in Christ, the True Vine (15:1-11)

- 11. Friends of Christ (15:12-17)
- 12. The Hatred of the world (15:18- 16:4a)
- 13. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15)
- 14. Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned Into Joy (16:16-24)
- 15. Prayer in His Name (16:25-32)
- 16. He's Spoken That You Might Have Peace (16:33) <u>The High Priestly Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)</u>
- 17. Jesus Prays For Himself (17:1-5)
- 18. Jesus Prays For His Present People (17:6-19)
- 19. Jesus Prays For His Future People (17:20-26)

We are in John 14, the great "comfort" chapter, which takes place in the Upper Room on the night before Christ's crucifixion. The chapter starts with: "Let not your heart be troubled." The first antidote to a troubled heart is to trust in Jesus Christ – believe in Him – put your faith in Him. We've gone over two reasons so far for why we should believe in Him as we do in God. The first reason is that He is trustworthy in His promises – He promises that His Father's house has many mansions, He's going there to prepare a place for us, and He's going to come back and get us so we can be there with Him. If this wasn't true, He would have told us. The second reason is that He is the only way to get to His Father – He is the only way for us to get those things that He has promised to us. If you trust in anything else, you will go to hell. We'll go over a third reason today: we should believe in Him because of His relationship with His Father – the Father is in Him, and He is in the Father.

Last time, we went over an interaction between Thomas and Jesus, which ended with Jesus saying, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." (14:7). This results in Philip speaking and Jesus responding:

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me,
Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the
Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I
speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the
works. Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the
very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do
shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.
And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in
the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it]." (John 14:8-14)

I'm going to go over today's text later in the sermon, but first I want to lay some groundwork. We are coming face-to-face with two of the greatest mysteries in all scripture – the Trinity, and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. So before going any further, I think it would be good to briefly go over those two things.

Trinity

The word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible, but the doctrine certainly does. Simply stated, the Bible teaches that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. To flesh that out a little bit, the one, eternal God exists as three distinct, co-equal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. When laying out the Great Commission, Jesus told us that we are to baptize "in the name [singular] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 28:19). So, what does the scripture teach us about the Trinity? I'm going to tell you seven things and provide a little bit of scriptural support for each one.

- 1. There is one God (monotheism). [Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4]
- 2. The Father is God. [John 6:27]
- 3. The Son is God. [John 1:1. Also compare Isaiah 40:3 to Mark 1.]
- 4. The Holy Spirit is God. [Acts 5:3-4. Also compare Isaiah 6:8-10 to Acts 28:25-27.]
- 5. The Father and Son are distinct from one another. [The Father sent the Son John 3:16-17, Galatians 4:4; they love one another John 3:35, 5:20, 14:31; they speak to one another John 11:41-42; they know one another Matthew 11:27; the Son is our Advocate with the Father 1 John 2:1.]
- 6. The Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct from one another. [The Holy Spirit descends on the Son at His baptism Luke 3:22; the Son sends the Holy Spirit John 15:26, 16:7; the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son John 16:13-14.]
- 7. The Father and the Holy Spirit are distinct from one another. [The Father sends the Holy Spirit John 14:26, 15:26; the Holy Spirit intercedes with the Father Romans 8:26-27.]

A few implications from this are:

- 1. If God exists as a Trinity, then God has always existed as a Trinity and always will exist as a Trinity He doesn't change. If there was any doubt, the scripture tells us that each person in the Godhead is eternal: The Father is eternal (John 17:24), the Son is eternal (Hebrews 13:8), and the Holy Spirit is eternal (Hebrews 9:14).
- 2. Each person in the Trinity is 100% God. That is, each person has 100% of the attributes or the essence of deity. The Father, Son and Spirit aren't each 1/3 of God they each are fully God. (You might hear this summarized as "one in essence, three in person.").
- 3. The three persons in the Godhead do everything in concert, and do not act at odds with one another. For example, Salvation is of the Lord. He saves us. Each member in the

Trinity participates in our salvation, though they may have different functions/roles (e.g., the Father elects, the Son offers Himself as an atonement, and the Holy Spirit regenerates).

So, that's a brief overview of what the scripture teaches on the subject – there is one God, the three persons in the Godhead are coequally God, and the three persons in the Godhead are distinct from one another. Wrapping our finite minds around the infinite God, however, is another matter. We have no frame of reference. There is nothing to compare Him to. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." (Isaiah 40:25). Sometimes we try to use analogies to try to make it make sense ("it's like an egg, where there's a shell and a yolk and a white"), and analogies can have some limited use. But we should be careful: at best, any analogy will be incomplete, and at worst, it could introduce false doctrine (despite our best intentions). We must be comfortable with not being able to comprehend this mystery. Any attempt to shoehorn the infinite God into our finite minds will almost assuredly end in false teaching and strange, deadly doctrines being introduced into the church. "It doesn't make sense to my great intellect, so I'm going to change some stuff to make it make sense." The solution is to be content with believing what God has revealed to us, even though you may not be able to comprehend it. With that in mind, here are some common misunderstandings and errors, each coming from denying one aspect of what the Bible teaches on the matter:

- 1. Tritheism This teaches that there are three separate gods (it is a form of polytheism). The rationale is that if the Bible says that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, then there must be three separate gods. This denies the teaching of the scripture that there is one God (monotheism).
- 2. Subordinationism This teaches that the Son and Spirit are part of the Trinity, but they are lesser than the Father. This denies the scripture's teaching that each person in the Godhead is coequally God.
- 3. Modalism This might be the one that we would be most prone to. It teaches that God is sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, and sometimes the Holy Ghost. It is often compared to an actor on the stage who plays multiple characters and wears a different mask for each character. It often manifests itself in statements like: "The Son is the Father." This denies that the persons in the Godhead are distinct from one another.

The next question is, who cares? To be honest, I've often thought of this as a musty, stuffy old doctrine that people with too much time on their hands sit around and think about. But this is a very vital and practical doctrine. After all, it's the doctrine that Jesus is fleshing out for us here over the next several chapters. It's a doctrine that is intended to comfort us. But how is it practical to us? I can think of a few reasons:

- 1. This is the God of the Bible. This is the way that He has presented Himself. If we try to change that to accommodate the limits of our understanding, then we are worshipping a God that we have constructed rather than the God of the Bible.
- 2. The gospel is Trinitarian. That is, the message of the gospel involves the whole Trinity. You see it in John 3, for instance. We learn in that chapter that the Father gave and sent His Son into the world "that the world through Him might be saved." The Son came and would be lifted up, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." The Holy Spirit regenerates men they must be born again, of the Spirit, in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Each person in the Trinity is actively involved in our salvation. Without the Trinity, you have a false gospel, and such who have a false gospel are accursed (Galatians 1:8-9).
- 3. You can't truly believe in Jesus without the Trinity. John tells us that the reason that he wrote his gospel is "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31). You can't believe in Him without believing that He is the Christ. The word "Christ" means "anointed." Who anointed Him? The Holy Spirit "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor..." (Luke 4:18). You can't believe in Him without believing that He is the Son of God. And if a Son, there must be a Father.
- 4. You can't understand the love of God without it. It shines a whole new light on what the statement "God is love" means. Before the foundation of the world, the Father was loving the Son (John 17:24). It's in His very nature to love. And amazingly, it's that same love that He loves us with! In praying to His Father, Jesus says "thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John 17:23). What also took place before the foundation of the world was that the Father chose us, predestinated our adoption and made us accepted, all in and by Christ (Ephesians 1:4-6). And He's given us as gifts to the Son, as the Son's adopted brothers and the Father's adopted children (see John 17:1-2, Hebrews 2:10-13). It all starts with His love to the Son.
- 5. How you view God impacts every aspect of your life. I'll give you one example. When you look at the Trinity, you see a relational God that is, a God who, by His very nature, is involved in intimate fellowship, communion, and relationships. You see a God who's very being involves three persons dwelling in perfect unity. If that's how you see God, that might have an impact on how you interact with one another. "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Incarnation

I've already talked about this in parts 1 and 2 of this series of sermons, but I wanted to hit it from a slightly different angle today. Philippians 2:5-11 is one of the most important texts in the scripture about the incarnation of Christ. Verse 7 says that He "made himself of no

reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." As I mentioned in a previous sermon, making Himself of no reputation means that He emptied Himself. Emptied Himself of what? Previously, I said, "I believe it at least means that in some way, He emptied Himself of the honor, dignity and glory that is due to Him as God. He temporarily laid it aside or veiled it, as it were, and took upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men."

Another aspect of Him "making Himself of no reputation" is that when He took on the flesh, He willingly put aside His divine power unless the Father directed Him to use that power. In other words, as God, He had the power and authority to do or know things that a mere man would not have been able to do or know, but He chose to not use that power and authority unless it was part of His mission on earth that His Father had sent Him to do. An example might help. He had the divine prerogative and power to turn stones into bread, but in Matthew 4:3-4, He chose not to do that because that would not have fulfilled the Father's will. But He did choose to exercise His divine power to feed 5,000 with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes in Matthew 14:16-21, because that did fulfill the Father's will. Understanding that might help make a lot of stuff make sense.

The book of John makes the deity of Christ clear – but it also makes clear Jesus' absolute obedience to, submission to and dependence on the Father. So, as you read through John, you'll see that Jesus bases His authority on the fact that the Father sent Him, He speaks the Father's words, He performs the Father's works, He does the Father's will. (See John 3:34; 4:34; 5:17-30, 36; 6:29, 32, 38; 7:16-18, 28; 8:16, 26-29, 38-42; 10:17-18, 25, 37; 11:41f; 12:45-50; 14:10, 23-31; 17:2-8, 14). As the incarnated God-man, He is simultaneously the perfect example of submission to the Father, and the express image of His person. While perfectly submitting to the Father, He also stands in perfect authority over His creation.

So, moving into the text for today, I will break this into three sections: "To See Jesus Is To See the Father," "Mutual Indwelling of the Son and Father," and "Results of Believing on Jesus."

To See Jesus Is To See the Father

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?" (John 14:8-9)

This is the Apostle Philip speaking here, as opposed to the Philip we meet in Acts 8 who baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. He was the first Apostle whom Jesus personally sought out by saying, "follow me." (John 1:43). Philip had been there from the beginning. He was the one

that Jesus proved by asking, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John 6:5) in the feeding of the 5,000, to which he responded, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them." (John 6:7). (Many commentators believe that Jesus specifically went to Philip because he was the "provider" of the group, responsible for the logistics of food, etc.)

This is that Philip saying, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Now, Jesus had just said, "from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." (John 14:7). I don't know why Philip says this. Maybe he is so laser-focused on getting an answer to his question that he isn't listening to Jesus, or that he isn't recognizing that the answer to what he's looking for is standing right in front of him. Maybe he wants to correct Jesus, like, "You say we've seen Him – but we haven't. Show Him to us." Maybe he doesn't think that seeing Jesus is good enough – he thinks he needs to see some visible representation of the Father also, similar to Moses asking to see the glory of the Lord. Maybe he's simply judging the situation with eyes of flesh (like he did in the feeding of the 5,000). Or maybe it's some conglomeration of all those things, or more. But I think the root of it all is little faith and some ignorance.

There's a lot of Philip in a lot of us — we're slow of faith, slow to see the reality that is before us, quick to evaluate things by our flesh, quick to forget the most basic of truths, quick to ask for things that we're too blind to see that God has already given us. And Jesus rebukes him for it. Not a blistering rebuke, but a rather mild rebuke, given the circumstances. It's a rebuke, though, that we should all pay heed to. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" The more blessings that God has given us, and the more means He has given us to know Him, and the more time He has given us to learn and meditate on those things, the more inexcusable it is when we don't know Him and love Him to the degree that we ought to. John Trapp says: "Ignorance under means of knowledge is a blushful sin." Matthew Henry encourages us to ask ourselves, "Have I been so long a hearer of sermons, a student in the scripture, a scholar in the school of Christ, and yet so weak in the knowledge of Christ, and so unskillful in the word of righteousness?"

Philip has standing before him the most perfect revelation and representation of the Father and he doesn't recognize that for what it is. If you want to see the Father, look at the Son – the Son reveals Him to you! John 1:18 tells us that He "declares" the Father – it means He unfolds and explains the Father. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that He is the express image of the person of the Father and Colossians 1:15 tells us He is the image of the invisible God – He has the same nature, the same attributes. If you want to see God, this is how you see God.

So, Philip says that if he can just see the Father, that will suffice. I don't think Philip is right about that, and I think it's a little bit dangerous to think that way. People might sit around and say, "if I could just see some visible sign of the invisible God – some theophany – that's all I

would need." Well, the children of Israel saw that at Sinai. "And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Exodus 24:17). Forty days later, they had constructed a golden calf and were singing and dancing naked in some idolatrous festival they had concocted.

On the other side of the coin, seeing God is one of the great desires that a child of God has, so I can understand where Philip is coming from here. Job said, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job 19:26). Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8). John said, "We shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2). David said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15). We certainly can't see Him now as we will then, but we can see everything we need to see now in the Son that is revealed to us in the scripture – "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36), "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28).

Mutual Indwelling of the Son and Father

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." (John 14:10-11)

Here we have a little exposition of John 10:30 – "I and my Father are one." This is the language of complete unity, while maintaining that there is a distinction between the Father and the Son. The Son is not some rogue entity that is separate and apart from the Father, doing His own thing, while the Father is up in heaven doing His own thing. No - they work in concert, they work in unison, such that whatever the Son says are the words of the Father and whatever the Son does are the works of the Father. The Son never says anything that isn't the word of the Father, and never does anything that isn't the work of the Father. Their union is so intimate that to understand the one is to understand the other. They are absolutely inseparable – they are one. Here we see part of the mystery of the Trinity.

Now, it's a little bit disappointing that Jesus has to exhort them to believe Him here. Disappointing, but not particularly surprising. We ought to know that from our own experiences of waxing and waning faith. And He isn't just exhorting and pleading with them to believe — He's commanding them to believe: "Believe me," He says. And He appeals to the divinity of His words and His works as the evidence. We're all judged by others based on our words and our works, and Jesus is applying this same common standard in this situation. "Look at what I've said. Look at what I've done. This should prove to you that I am in the Father and the Father is in me." Now, some may object and say, "What's the difference

between Jesus and any other prophet? Other prophets spoke the words of God. They did the works. Some of them even performed miracles." The difference is that Christ's words and works point to Himself. A mere human prophet doesn't point to himself; he points to Christ. It all terminates in Christ.

One more thing to point out here is that I'm happy to report that Jesus is merciful to them in their weak faith. He recognizes the situation and condescends to them. Remember that these guys are in a state of dismay – they've just learned that Jesus will be leaving them, one of them will be a traitor, and Peter will deny Him. But Jesus speaks mercifully to them, as much as to say, "You ought to believe me simply because I'm telling you. But I know you're struggling with weak faith. So at least believe me because you've seen the works." Sometimes we need a little boost to our faith – sometimes we need to recall the works of God or see a work of God. God knows that and will give it to us when we need it. David said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." (Psalm 27:13). So, He points them to His works. Note that He does the same thing to unbelievers in John 10: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." (v. 37-38). The difference is, for unbelievers, His works harden them in their sins; for believers, they confirm our faith.

Results of Believing on Jesus

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." (John 14:12-14)

Don't forget that when you see Jesus say "verily, verily," it means that He's wanting to draw particular attention to what He's saying. Believing in Jesus is not just some state of mind; it's not academic. It comes with real consequences, benefits and privileges. This passage talks about two of those:

1. We will do the works that He did, and greater works. If the Lord hadn't said here that we'd do greater works, then I'd be scared to so much as think such a thing. But here it is. We have a precious promise here. The works that Jesus did are the works that we will do, and greater. How can this be? We know that the Apostles in the early church performed similar miracles as Christ did, in the name of Christ. But I've never healed anyone. I've never raised anyone from the dead. How can it be said that we do the same works, let alone greater works? Some say that the "works" we're talking about

here are those involved in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (and not necessarily "miraculous" works), and they are greater now than when Christ preached in the sense that they are greater in extent. That is, we have the capacity to preach to the whole world nowadays where He preached to a very small geographical area for only a few years. There's a lot of truth in that interpretation.

But He gives us a reason for why they are greater — "because I go unto my Father." That's why they're greater. He tells them later on, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7). So, part of the greatness of these works is that they are done by the Holy Ghost working in us, and the Holy Ghost would not come in the fashion that He came until after Christ departed. The same Spirit that worked in Christ is now working through the whole body of Christ — they are the works that Jesus did because it is the same Spirit working the works. But we are participating in a new era, which was ushered in by Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension. We get to participate in the kingdom of God and enjoy all the benefits and fruits of Christ's triumphant, finished work. That's why they are called "greater" works. And I believe that the smallest and most relatively insignificant work that is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit in this age falls into this category. "LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." (Isaiah 26:12). Lord willing, we'll learn a lot more about the work of the Holy Spirit in coming sermons.

Knowing that one of our privileges of believing on the Lord Jesus is that we will do greater works, that makes it all the more inexcusable when we let spiritual lethargy and laziness rule the day. I found a quote calling this "the criminality of [our] supineness in the cause of God." I'm drawn to Jesus' parable in Luke 14, where a man made a great supper and bade many, and people started to come up with one excuse after the other. One had bought some land, one had bought some oxen, one had married a wife. These are common things that we all have to deal with – real estate, job, family. But when you make a practice of using the affairs of this life as excuses for laziness in the cause of God, the parable tells us what will happen: "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Instead, who gets to go to the supper? "The poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." So, I'm suggesting that if you want to see what the polar opposite of "greater works" is, take a close read of Luke 14:16-24 and apply it to yourself. Give yourself a hefty dose of self-examination.

2. We will have effectual prayer. He tells us that if we ask anything in His name, He will do it. Note that He says HE will do it, which is another claim to deity, and another example of His intimate union with the Father (because in 16:23, it tells us that the Father

answers prayers). And He tells us this twice, in verses 13 and 14. Whenever God tells you something twice, pay close attention to it. In fact, this must be a pretty important passage – it starts with "verily, verily" and it ends when Him telling us the same thing twice, to confirm the matter.

So, what's He doing here? Giving us a blank check? If we tack "in Jesus's name we pray" at the end of a prayer, can we get whatever we want? Of course not. To ask in His name is to ask consistent with His character, His will, His commandments, His glory, His purpose; it is to ask knowing that He is our Mediator; it is to ask pleading His merit and intercession on our behalf. Are you asking amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts? (James 4:3). If so, you are not asking in Jesus's name. Are you asking for any reason other than that the Father may be glorified? If so, you are not asking in Jesus's name. When you act in someone else's name, there is a privilege and a responsibility that goes along with that - you don't act for your own glory and benefit but rather take great care that their interests are in the forefront. That is the spirit with which one should approach prayer. "Hallowed be thy name." (Matthew 6:9). One reason that your prayers may not be effective is that you are treating them as if you're the main show, rather than glorifying the Father. No prayer that any human offers up will be perfect and sinless (that's why we need Christ and the Holy Spirit as our intercessors), but it ought to be delivered with the right frame of heart. And if you do pray in His name, He promises that "I will do it." He will do it for your greatest good, no doubt, but the grand end and purpose to our prayer being answered is "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." He might not do it how or when you thought He should have done it, but He says He will do it.

To conclude, I'd like to bring the last three sermons together, because John 14:1-14 is really one unit. It is all about how to have an untroubled heart by believing in Jesus. He gives us three reasons why:

- 1. He is preparing a place for us in His Father's house and will come get us and take us there we can believe what He promises we can take Him at His word.
- 2. He is the only way to the Father.
- 3. He and His Father are one.

So, He's told us about the destination, He's told us about the path to get to the destination, and He's told us about His authority and power to get us there. And if you don't believe Him about those things, then you don't have authentic faith in the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible. True faith in Him, though, is comfort for a troubled heart. Lord willing, the next sermon will bring us to the second way to have an untroubled heart – by loving and obeying Jesus.