

Sunday, June 12, 2022

This is the fifteenth in a series of sermons on John 13-17 (“The Farewell Discourse”).

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus Loves His own (13:1) [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. Preparing a Place (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) [5/9/2021] 8. Peace and Comfort (14:15-27) [6/27/2021] 9. Loving God (14:28-31) [8/15/2021] 10. Abiding in Christ, the True Vine (15:1-11)[10/3/2021] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Friends of Christ (15:12-17) [11/21/2021] 12. The Hatred of the World (15:18- 16:4a) [1/9/2022] 13. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15) [2/27/2022] 14. Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned into Joy (16:16-24) [4/17/2022] 15. Direct Access to the Father (16:25-32) 16. He’s Spoken That You Might Have Peace (16:33)
<i>The High Priestly Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)</i> 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) |
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I had originally entitled this sermon “Prayer In His Name” but as I worked on it, I thought “Direct Access To The Father” would be a more appropriate title. As a reminder, we’ve been following Jesus and His disciples on the night leading up to His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. It begins in the Upper Room (John 13-14), and then continues into the streets of Jerusalem (see John 14:31). Jesus has announced His departure back to His Father, and the passage we’ve been going through in John 16 lays out three benefits to that departure. We have already gone over the first two – 1) the coming of the Comforter and 2) fullness of joy. The third is the topic of today’s sermon, and it is this: we have direct access to God the Father in prayer in the name of Jesus. Before reading today’s text, I want to make two points. First, this is obviously not an exhaustive list of benefits to Christ’s departure back to heaven. The riches that have been secured and made available to us because of that work of His are unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8). Second, these are three distinct benefits, but they are all tightly interrelated. Namely, when the Comforter comes, one of His fruits is joy (Galatians 5:22), and He intercedes in our prayers (Romans 8:26-27); answered prayers that we have made to the Father in the name of Christ result in fullness of joy (John 16:24); and, our heavenly Father gives us the Comforter when we ask Him (Luke 11:13).

“These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus

answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” (John 16:25-32)

Let’s go with this breakdown: “The One Who Hears Our Prayers,” and “The Ones Who Pray.”

The One Who Hears Our Prayers

“These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” (John 16:25-28)

You may recall that last time, we ended with a couple verses about prayer, the main thrust of which is that answered prayer results in fullness of joy:

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:23-24)

This week’s passage is also about prayer, but the main thrust this time is that we have direct access to our loving Father in the name of Christ. Indeed, the two main things that we learn here about the One to whom we pray is that He is our Father and He loves us.

Jesus starts this section by telling us that He had been speaking in proverbs, but the time is coming when that’s going to come to an end, and He’s going to show us plainly of the Father. The word translated “proverbs” here is defined as “any dark saying which shadows forth some didactic truth, especially a symbolic or figurative saying.” Notice the contrast between “speak unto you in proverbs” and “shew you plainly of the Father.” The idea is that He had been telling them things that were hard for them to understand (both in this Discourse, and during His entire ministry). But the day is coming, He says, when it will be plain. It wasn’t merely that He was using symbolic language that was particularly hard to understand – it was that they personally had a hard time understanding it. There are a lot of reasons for that, including their own dullness, their preconceived notions about the Messiah, and the simple fact that the events of Jesus’s death, resurrection and ascension had to actually happen before they were able to comprehend a lot of what He had been talking about. It’s easy for us to look back on these guys and say, “I can’t believe they didn’t understand what was going on here – it’s so

easy for me to understand.” But remember that they were on the other side of the cross, and we’re on this side.

Now, the particular thing that He says that He’s going to make plain is “the Father.” He’s going to teach us about the Father. Remember, the overarching purpose of His whole incarnation was to glorify the Father. It’s important for you to have an accurate conception of the Father – often times, we might be tempted to focus so much on Christ that we forget the first person of the Trinity. And how is He going to “shew you plainly of the Father?” Well, back up to verse 15 – “All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he [i.e., the Holy Spirit] shall take of mine, and shall **shew** it unto you.” This is part of the work of the Holy Spirit of Christ. He teaches us about the Father. He teaches us about His character, His attributes, His glory, His works, etc. Read the New Testament! It’s full of plain speech about the Father. And the indwelling Spirit illuminates our understanding as we read and hear it expounded.

As mentioned above, Jesus gives us a couple attributes of the Father here. First, He is a “Father”! This isn’t just some metaphor to help us understand Him – it is in His very nature to be a Father. We have a lot of people in this church, from a lot of different backgrounds and circumstances and experiences. But one of the common features that we all share is that each of us has an earthly father. Your father may have been absent all or part of your life (either due to abandonment or death or some other reason). From time to time, he may have been (or may still be) aloof, overbearing, impatient, angry, capricious, frivolous. Or a combination of those things and many others. You may get along really well with your father. Or you may not like your father at all. The fact is that earthly fathers are sinners. Even in the good things we do, we are sinners. In fact, Jesus tells us in Luke 11:13 that we’re evil, even in the doing of good for our children (“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”).

I’m telling you all this because I understand that people tend to have a particular conception of what a “father” is based on their own experiences with their own fathers. I’m asking you to put that aside and remember that our Father in heaven is the perfect Father. He is the standard for fatherhood. Human fathers are fallen and corrupt. In fact, one of the main things that human fathers bring to the table is that by our sins and deficiencies, we highlight the perfections of our heavenly Father by way of comparison. It’s like when a precious gem is set on a black backdrop. Let me give one example. James 1:5 tells us: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, **and upbraideth not**; and it shall be given him.” That word “upbraid” can mean many things, but in this context, I believe it means “to cast in one’s teeth.” That means to bring up something that the person has said or done and spitefully throw it in their face. Humans do this to each other – fathers do this to their children – because we’re sinful creatures. The very fact that the Holy Ghost thought it

necessary to put the phrase “and upbraideth not” in this verse shows that people tend to be concerned that the Father is going to treat us the same way that sinful humans treat us. The bottom line is this: we’re patterned off God, and He’s not patterned off us. You can use these human relationships to help understand God, but please, don’t use the sins and deficiencies of your own father to judge our heavenly Father.

With all that said, the fact that He is a “Father” necessarily implies that there are “children” involved. Fathers, by definition, “beget.” Jesus, of course, is the “only begotten Son.” (It means that this Father/Son relationship is unique- it is one-of-a-kind). God’s elect are also said to be begotten of God. We are His children. And I’m not talking in the sense that He created us. I’m talking in the sense that He has entered into a special relationship with us. I’m talking about “children of God” vs. “children of the devil.” (1 John 3:10).

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:1-2)

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” (1 John 5:1)

Adoption terminology is also used to describe this relationship with God.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Romans 8:12-17)

Adoption means that we started off in one family and now we have moved over to a new family. By nature, we were once children of the devil (children of wrath, children of disobedience) but now we are born again and are the children of God. We are now part of the heavenly family, and we are given all the privileges thereof (e.g., “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” – 1 Peter 1:4). This is such an amazing act of condescension on the part of God, I’d be scared to call myself a “child of God” if He hadn’t made it so clear in the scripture that this is what He’s done for us. It is no accident that this topic is one of the first things that Jesus talks about after His resurrection: “Go to **my brethren**,

and say unto them, I ascend unto **my Father, and your Father**; and to my God, and your God.” (John 20:17). Beloved, we are brothers of Christ and children of the Father. If this isn’t how you view your relationship to God, it’s time for you to spend some time reorienting yourself.

The second attribute of the Father given here is that He Himself loves us. Now, there’s some confusing language here. Jesus says, “I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.” It almost sounds like He’s saying that He’s not going to intercede for us anymore. Well, He just said in chapter 14:16: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” And then in a few minutes, He’s going to spend most of John 17 praying for them. And then in Hebrews 7:25, we learn that “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” His point is not to say that He isn’t ever going to intercede for us. Rather, His point is that a lot of people have an incorrect view of the Father. They think of Him as distant and unapproachable, unwilling to take the time to hear His children. And they think that they need the Son to step in and butter Him up a little bit, so He’ll listen to us. That’s not how it is at all. The commentary of Jamieson, Fausset and Brown explains it very succinctly: *“Christ does pray the Father for His people, but not for the purpose of inclining an **unwilling ear**.”* Jesus is saying here that He doesn’t have to step in and convince the Father to hear our prayer. Why? “For the Father himself loveth you!” When you go to pray, understand that you’re going directly to your Father who loves you, who delights to hear from His dear children, who has appointed the means of prayer, and who has bidden you to pray.

“...I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” (Ezekiel 36:36-37).

He’s the one who chose you from before the foundation of the world. He’s the one who showed His love to you by sending His Son to die for you. He doesn’t love you because Jesus died for you – it’s the exact opposite. The Father sent Jesus to die for you because He loved you from eternity past, from the time that you were chosen in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). And it’s in the name of His Son that you are to approach Him. He’s said several times that we’re supposed to pray in His name, and I’ve already explained what that means (see [“Seeing God – John 14:8-14”](#) for a good summary). But let me add one more nuance to “praying in His name” that I don’t think I’ve addressed before. Some people approach prayer (like they do a lot of things in their lives) with a false humility. “I’m just so unworthy, it doesn’t feel right for me to talk to God.” First, God never told you to wait until you were worthy. But He did tell you to pray. If you think that you’re so humble that you need to disobey God’s commands, that is nothing less than pride disguised as humility. Second, it is true – you are unworthy. But Jesus is not unworthy, and you are coming in His name. You don’t come arrogantly or cavalierly on your own merit - but you come boldly in His name.

And one more thing here in this passage that might cause some confusion. Jesus says: “the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” There’s a bedrock principle that you can’t forget: God’s love for us is founded on “the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:5). He loved Jacob before he was born and had done neither good nor evil (Rom. 9:11-13). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10). So, when Jesus says that the Father loves us “because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God,” you have to understand that His love for us preceded our existence – before we loved Him, and before we believed that He came from God, He already loved us. So, what does this mean? There are a couple ways to take it. First, the stronger our love and faith to Christ is, the more we experience the Father’s love. Second, we can be assured that the Father Himself does, in fact, love us because we love and believe on Christ (that is, our love for and faith in Christ demonstrates that the Father does indeed love us, because otherwise we wouldn’t love or believe in Him at all). It’s interesting that the word used for “love” in this verse is the Greek word “phileo” which may be translated as “a warm and friendly love.” It’s the only time in the Bible that this word is used to describe God the Father’s love for us (normally, the word is “agapao”). I think the message is that God is not only gracious and merciful to us, but He also delights in us. He has a deep and warm affection for us. But may I add – please don’t get too sentimental with this. Remember that God is holy and is to be feared and revered.

So, we can go directly to the Father in prayer. But one may ask, “what about before Jesus came to earth? Didn’t the Old Testament saints pray directly to Him? How did Jesus coming change that?” And my answer to that is that when Jesus died, “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” (Mark 15:38). And I would also say this:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19-22)

The Old Testament saints lived under a system of sacrifices, such that animal sacrifices were made from the time that Adam sinned (Genesis 3:21). By the time we get to the Mosaic economy of things, sacrifices are made daily. This was the framework under which these people prayed. The high priest was the only one who could enter the holy of holies, and he could only do it one day each year, on the Day of Atonement. It was a constant reminder that they were sinners, and that the Messiah was going to come one day and once and for all take care of those sins...but it was also a constant reminder that He hadn’t come yet. By His death, Jesus removed all that, and opened a “new and living way.” This is why I said earlier that we

can boldly come to the Father in His name. I don't claim to understand all of this, but I do know that whatever hindrances may have been in the way, they were all removed in one fell swoop when Jesus offered Himself up as a sacrifice. So just be thankful that we have the access to God that we do have and take advantage of it early and often, remembering that the privilege was bought at a tremendous cost. Be importunate but be patient. Don't go sporadically. Don't only go when you want something, and don't wait to frantically approach Him when the ox is in the ditch.

The Ones Who Pray

“His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”
(John 16:29-32)

When I read this, I note a few things:

1. On the part of the 11 apostles, I see sincere faith and excitement at understanding the Word of God. I also see some other things. Slowness to learn, pride, self-assurance, fickleness, immaturity, weak and wavering faith, cowardice, unbelief, fear of man.
2. On the part of Jesus, I see a bit of exasperation and sarcasm (“Do ye **now** believe? What about the last three years? What about the next few hours?”), love for His people, omniscience, love for the Father. He's not questioning the sincerity of their faith or despising how small it is, but rather He's rebuking them for their over-confidence and arrogant security in it. Trapp: *“I know, ere trouble comes, you are jolly fellows. But it is easy to swim in a warm bath: and every bird can sing in a sunshine day.”*
3. On the part of the Father, I see His love for the Son, and His faithfulness being contrasted with the faithlessness of the disciples. (This makes it all the more heart-rending when Jesus dolefully cries out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” who forsook Him not out of faithless cowardice, but in punishment for the sin He bore).

I think we can all see ourselves in the apostles here. But let's focus on self-assurance because I think that's the prevailing thing going on with them. It's a real-life example of “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12). These guys have clamped down on a little scrap of truth and now fancy themselves to be way more spiritually mature than they actually are. So much so that within the next few hours, they will be scattered and retreat to where they came from, just as it was prophesied.

“Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” (Psalm 69:20)

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” (Zechariah 13:7)

These men, who are so gung-ho about having an understanding, are going to abandon their Savior! If you recall, He told Peter earlier in the evening that he would deny Him three times. Now, He’s telling the whole group, “You’re all going to forsake me.” Ryle: *“The best Christians know but little of their own hearts.”*

Now, there is a phenomenon called the “Dunning-Kruger Effect.” It describes the fact that often, the less somebody knows about something, the more he believes he knows about it. I don’t think we need Dunning and Kruger to tell us this, because we all know it to be true by experience, and very likely, we’ve all been guilty of it. For example, you may see it in a college student who takes an introductory course in something and comes out thinking that he’s God’s gift to that discipline of study. The most pernicious and treacherous part of it is that, by definition, you don’t realize how ignorant you actually are, and you truly believe that you know a lot about it. Sometimes, it elicits pity or embarrassment for the person (or a good laugh!). Other times, you become outraged at their hubris. It is particularly vile and dangerous when the Word of God is involved, which I think we can all bear witness to. I think we’re seeing this phenomenon in our passage today. They understood a little glimmer of truth, concluded that they’re now experts on the subject (“**Now** we’re sure,” “**Now** we believe”), and then had to face the painful consequences of their self-assurance by having God knock them down to teach them humility. I’ll leave it to each of you to apply it to yourself.

But there’s hope for us. It is these types of people for whom Jesus has died and opened a new and living way – these ones who have been called and have sincere faith but are yet tainted with sin (pride, fear of man, self-assurance, etc.). These are the ones whom God our Father loves and desires to approach Him in the name of His Son with our prayers, praise, petitions, cares, thanksgivings, etc. So go to Him! “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Next time, Lord willing, I hope to go over the concluding verse of the “discourse proper” (John 13:31-16:33) and then finish up in subsequent sermons with his “High Priestly Prayer” in John 17.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)