
The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Comforting Savior In the preparation of Christ (Part 2) John 14:1-4

1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going.

Many of you know that I love photography. I love to try to see from a particular scene something that is special, something that might captivate my eye. Often times, because of the limitations of my equipment and my experience, I will take a picture knowing that once I get it home, I can crop it, fix it, make it to be exactly what I see for it. I can take sometimes what is just a seemingly ordinary picture and turn it into something unique.

As we come to the opening verses of John 14, let me remind you that we have a sort of shift from the love of the Savior for “His own” being demonstrated in John 13 to the comfort of the Savior being communicated for “His own” here in chapter 14. We saw last week to some extent why this comfort was needed. The disciples’ world was being turned upside down – and from their perspective, it was not for the good...as their beloved Friend was speaking of heartache, betrayal, leaving, denial and even death. Their hearts sank...particularly as they had to come to grips with their own faithlessness; their own tendency to fail Jesus – learning the lessons that we all need to learn, that apart from Christ, apart from His grace, apart from His influence by His Spirit, apart from His love for us we are frail and incapable of anything that would point to the glory of God. The lesson of humility is being taught to Peter specifically and to the disciples in general as Jesus predicts his failure. And beloved, I say to you that until we recognize our own inability to love, to serve to follow Jesus as we ought apart from His strength, His working in our lives we will always come up short.

But here then are the comforting words of Jesus. John 14 starts out with Jesus preparing the disciples, giving them in verse 1 the remedy to cope with heartache...to not allow circumstances to sway them from obedience to His word and then to continue to trust explicitly in the words and person of God and Jesus Christ.

This morning then we want to see another way in which Jesus prepares His disciples for the troubling times ahead...to give them a hope...to show them the goal for which He intends for them. Where all they see at the moment is their

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)

failure and the heartache of what lies ahead, Jesus shows them His intention for His own...their destination as they believe in both God the Father and Himself; Jesus gives them the comfort and hope of heaven – the eternal abode of the glorious God and the assured destination for all those who have trusted in His Son Jesus Christ for salvation. And to a more wonderful extent than my taking an ordinary picture and turning it into something grander...Jesus takes "His own" and by His words and work takes us and makes us something grand for His glory...reminding us here of His sure intention to take us to heaven –giving them hope. And just how does Jesus reveal to the disciples this hope of heaven? He does so by explaining in part the nature of heaven in verse 2 and the assurance of heaven in verses 3-4.

I. The Nature of Heaven (14:2a)

In My Father's house are many dwelling places;

In light of the continued teaching of Jesus that is showing the disciples the pending trial of the cross and that He would soon be leaving them to that end, Jesus also reveals to them the truth that ought to comfort their hearts, the great benefit that awaits them as He accomplishes His purpose on the earth to redeem sinners and to reconcile those who believe in Him to God. This comfort of what heaven is like is given to comfort all those whose hearts get heavy with the trials and tribulations of this world...something better awaits those who believe or trust in God and believe also in Jesus. In verse two let me encourage you with at least four truths we might glean about heaven.

1. It is divine

Notice how Jesus begins this word of comfort saying... "In My Father's house..." When Jesus says this we assume that Jesus is not referring to Joseph, his earthly step-father as it were. Rather we know from the gospel accounts that Jesus is speaking of God the Father and here Jesus not only identifies Him as "My Father" implying His own intimate relationship to God the Father...but speaks of "My Father's house..."; His Father's abode or dwelling place. The Greek word for house has the idea of family...Jesus is referring to God's household...not only the place but even the influence and presence of God in this place.

In trying to describe this place, the apostle John, in Revelation 21 has to resort to likening it to precious stones and jewels. But the greatness of heaven is not in its appearance, but rather in who dwells there and here we see Jesus telling His disciples that heaven, as glorious as it is, is like a household...a divine household, with God present there as Father and Jesus present there as the eldest

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

brother and Savior. Consider the language of John as he describes the blessed hope of heaven in Revelation 21:3-4; 22-23:

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away...22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Beloved, this is the divine nature of heaven and as we will come to see in a moment, it is the place for which Jesus intends for each and everyone who so believes in God and so believes in Him.

2. *It is vast*

But not only is heaven divine, being filled with the blissful presence of God, notice as well that heaven, while a place is yet vast. Jesus says that in this house of God are **“many dwelling places.”** Now sometimes this is translated manions which might well depict for us the gloriousness of heaven, but I don't think hits the point. The word here for “dwelling places” could be translated “rooms” but I think that sounds a bit too sterile for the context. The picture here is that of a loving father of the ancient near east who would construct a place or room for his son to bring his bride. Of course there would be expense and energy expended to so build such an apartment for one son and the emphasis here is on “many dwelling places” Beloved, there is no inadquacies with God. There is no running out or running short on space in God's house.

We are not to see here some kind of divine housing tract but rather one grand and glorious building with multitudes of rooms or apartments awaiting all those for whom Jesus, the bridegroom would bring to this place. There will be more than enough room for all who believe and so as we feel crowded out, or pinched or sapped in this life, we must remember that the hope of heaven is abounding, is spacious and is ours.

3. *It is intimate*

But the idea of this vast place is not to make us thing that somehow this place is cold and distant. For remember that these dwelling places to which Jesus refers carries the idea of being connected with the Father's house. These are not

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)

individual houses but apartments all which the doors as it were open into the grand hall of the presence of God. Although this is a rather crude analogy, I imagine this of sorts like a divine dorm house with a grand main room and all the dwelling places right off the main room. For anyone who has been in such a room, you might know that privacy is not all that common...everyone knows when your there, where you are and what you are doing. And while that may have driven some of you crazy to be in such a situation on earth...such intimacy, such sharing, such communion will be the norm of heaven and our God and our Savior will always be there in the main room to behold, to praise and to glorify.

4. *It is corporate*

And this brings us to the last picture of the nature of heaven I would leave with you from John 14:2. Not only is it divine, filled with the presence of God; not only is it vast; having more than enough space for all the redeemed; and not only is it intimate as we have all in common, dwelling together in the presence of God; but finally then let me tell you that it is corporate. Heaven is not about us as individuals. It is about the One God and all who dwell there to rejoice in praising God. Of course we see the corporate nature of heaven revealed to us beautifully in Revelation 5:11-14

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

I'm going to see my Savior's face; I'm going to behold Him; to praise; to be with Him who loved my soul; who lovingly paid my debt; who purchased me and I will be surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, in the company of the redeemed. So then world; so then my defeated enemy; so then my flesh...bring what you may; assault me as you will; but know this...I am redeemed by Christ...I will not be shaken...I will not be moved...for I stand on Christ, my solid rock. And, I will sing the song of Psalm 107:1-2 with the saints on high...

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

1 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary...

Beloved, this is the hope of heaven...the divine presence of our loving God who has abundantly supplied us with a vast and intimate home with Him, a place where we will sing with the redeemed, “Worthy is the Lamb!”

II. The Assurance of Heaven (14:2b-4)

...if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going.

So now then let us turn our attention from the nature of heaven to what Jesus communicates about the assurance of heaven. Let me point out four aspects of the assurance of heaven, an assurance that ought to bring any disciple of Christ great comfort in any circumstance he finds himself.

1. By the wisdom of Christ

After speaking of the nature of heaven, Jesus says there in the middle of verse 2, **“if it were not so, I would have told you...”** This seemingly curious statement is the believer’s first assurance of heaven as we see the wisdom of Christ. Jesus knows heaven. He’s been there. He’s from there. It is his true abode. As Jesus communicates to His disciples His own departure to be with the Father, Jesus assures them that all that He has told them about heaven; particularly the part about there being plenty of room, was to indicate to them they would be with Him again. In other words, if the heavenly glory awaited Jesus only, He would not deceive them into thinking otherwise. Jesus would have told them clearly if heaven was only for Himself. Jesus would have told them if there was only but room for Himself. But because Jesus has been there; because Jesus knows the plan as it were, a plan to bring the full company of the redeemed into glory, the case is widely different...Jesus is speaking from experience.

2. By the work of Christ

So there is the assurance that heaven is great enough and available to all the redeemed, but just how is it that we get there? Notice what Jesus says next at the end of verse 2, **“for I go to prepare a place for you.”** Here then we see that heaven is assured for those who believe by the work of Christ. Notice that this is the work of Christ...He is the one who goes and He is the one who prepares.

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)

But just what does Jesus mean by saying, "I go to prepare a place for you." Is it like the Keith Green song, "You've been working on heaven 2000 years!" Is it that while creation took only six days, Jesus has been laboring, preparing and getting ready for us for 2000 years? I don't think this fits with what we have already been told. Remember Jesus has already told us about the nature of heaven. The Father's house stands firm, even as Jesus speaks these words. The dwelling places, the abodes for the redeemed are already built. Beloved, heaven was and stands ready for the redeemed. So then, what is it that Jesus must prepare?

May I submit to you that what must be prepared is us, those who until the cross and until faith were fit for hell not heaven. The word "prepare" could be properly translated "provide" and the tense in which it is written would suggest that Jesus is going to perform a one time act by which He would secure for all time those whom He was going to save. When Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you..." we might understand it to mean, I go to fulfill the work that will secure your place in heaven. And just what might that work be that secures the believer's place in heaven? You know it to be by the cross, the death, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God the Father that secures the believer's place in heaven.

Let us never forget that one of the glorious truths about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is that a man had forever defeated the effects of death. And furthermore, let us never forget the glorious truth that in the ascension of Christ, when He lifted off this earth some 50 days after His resurrection, disappearing in the clouds and headed to the right hand of God the Father that when Jesus sat down, it was the first time that a man had ever been physically, bodily in the presence of God.

This was one of the key points of the author of Hebrews who emphasized the fact that Jesus, truly God in the flesh; 100% God, but also 100% man like you and me, was now in the presence of God; that Jesus, the Man, had blazed the way for all of believing humanity to enjoy the hope of heaven.

Hebrews 4:14

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus [human name] the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

Hebrews 6:19-20

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus [human name] has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Beloved, this ought to bring us great comfort and even great joy...that by the work of Christ, all who believe in Him may follow Him into the blissful presence of God. It is all prepared or secured by the work of Christ.

3. By the word of Christ

And if by chance the work of Christ was not sufficient to secure our place in glory, verse 3 gives to us the word or promise of Christ. And just what is the promise of Christ? There are actually two in verse 3. Jesus says, “And if I go...” or maybe better understood... “Since I go to prepare a place for you...; since I will go and take the path to heaven via the cross; here then are the promises I make to you.” The first promise is simply, “I will come again.” For you linguist this promise is called a “futuristic present middle indicative” – how’s that for a clear description? All it means is that while His coming again is yet future, it is so assured, it is like it is happening now. In other words we can know with full confidence that Jesus most assuredly will come again. This is the first promise.

The second promise that reveals the assurance of heaven is the statement, “and I will receive you to Myself.” Oh how sweet a promise this is! Oh what a great assurance we have. Jesus will come and receive those who have believed in God and have also believed in Him. We could read this, “I will come again and come along side of you and shall take you along with Me to my home.” On earth believers are pilgrims, travelers, and in essence those who are without a home, but Jesus will come and pull us to Himself and take us along with Him to His Father’s house. This is promised to us...this is our inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for us. Jesus has promised it...He has given His word. Do you believe? Has such a belief in Jesus securing such a place for you in heaven by paying the price for your sins transformed your heart; has it changed your life. Jesus is coming again...not just to comfort us on this sin-cursed earth, but to take us with Him to glory so that even where He is now, we will one day also be. Oh, glorious thought? Oh, transforming thought?

4. By the way of Christ

And this then brings us to the final assurance of heaven as given by Christ in our text. Not only are we assured of heaven by the wisdom, by the work and by the

The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

word of Christ, but also by the way of Christ. We read in verse 4, **“And you know the way where I am going.”** You know the way...the way of Christ. While the disciples were a bit slow in understanding the full meaning of this statement as we will not next week, the point Jesus was making is that they knew deep down that Jesus was going to suffer and die...for their sins. There was a recognition, simple at this point, but a realization nonetheless that Jesus was doing for them now what they could not do for themselves. He was to take their sins to the cross and die to them, bury them and be raised in newness of life. This was the way of Christ. The disciples knew it had to be done for them. They were coming to grips with their own sinfulness and their own frailty as seen in Peter.

And beloved, I submit to you that we must come to grips with our own sinfulness and frailties as well. Remember what Jesus told Peter in John 13:8? **“If I do not wash you [if you don’t see that you need Me to do this work for you]...you have no part with Me.”** Beloved...do you know the way of Christ? Do you know that for you He suffered; for you He bled and died; for you He was raised to newness of life? And why did He do this? To be sure He did it to give you assurance of heaven, that you might look forward to glory with Him, but He also did as so many scriptures remind us, that we might follow the way of Christ ourselves, and deny ourselves, picking up our cross, that is dying to sin, dying to self and following Him...that is living for Him daily. In fact, our living for Jesus is another assurance of heaven...for as we live for Him we see the reality that via the cross, the tomb and His ascension into heaven that He has prepared that place for us.

So then, let us rejoice and speak often of the nature of heaven...a glorious place; filled with the divine presence; vast in its accommodations; an intimate place where we dwell with God and yet a place of constant corporate rejoice. Let us rejoice of our assurance of heaven; assured to us by the wisdom of Christ, for He has come from there; by the work of Christ, for He redeemed us so that we might be made ready for glory; by the word of Christ, for He has promised to lead us home; by the way of Christ...being dead to sin and alive to God.

Soli Deo Gloria

Copyright © 2008 Edward K. Godfrey. This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, and 2300 South 13th Street, Rogers, AR 72758.