
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 promise of Christ John 14:12-14

12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

There are certain times and activities in life that we would love to hold on to forever...those moments that we wish would go on and on...those experiences that we wish to savor as long as possible. And when it becomes apparent that such moments are rapidly passing bye, we can often become preoccupied with how little time is left or start dwelling upon how things are going to change when everything is over. It doesn't matter if it is child who might be concerned that he only has a few more minutes on the video game before he must go to bed, or the aching heart that is watching a loved one die, wondering how life will go on. We often react negatively to anything that we think will bring about change...particularly if it is seemingly change for the worst.

In many ways this appears to be what Jesus is addressing in John 14. We find Jesus, through His discourse and through answers to questions and requests, giving His disciples comfort in light of the pending difficulties that await both Jesus and His followers. And as we just read our text...I cannot help but get the sense that what Jesus is addressing here is a concern of the disciples, a concern that might be stated this way. As the disciples realize that Jesus really is leaving them, that He truly intends to go to the Father, they become concerned about this being the end. Again, these eleven had been with Jesus for three and a half years. And even as we will note in a moment, they had seen some spectacularly remarkable things and they themselves had even done some things with Jesus of a truly supernatural status. So, when Jesus spoke to His disciples about His leaving them to go to the father, the natural response would be a concern that all this ministry and all the signs of God's presence was coming to an end. The disciples didn't want it to end and wondered exactly what Jesus' leaving meant for them.

But in John 14:12-14, we find a most remarkable promise of Jesus Christ, a promise that indicated to the disciples that the departure of Jesus to the Father was not to be the cessation of His activity on the earth...it was not the end of the work of Christ; rather, the departure of Jesus would be the very means by which His people

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would be empowered to proliferate (to increase and spread more rapidly) His activity in every corner of the world.

So then, to these troubled hearts that were concerned that the ministry of Jesus had come to an end, Jesus responds with encouraging their hearts, saying in effect that His departure ended nothing, but would begin everything. And one of the lessons being communicated here to the disciples and of which we will camp on this morning is that Jesus is calling His followers to be His representatives on earth. In this promise of Jesus we find comfort that Jesus intends to do greater things through the ministry of His people than even what He accomplished while on the earth.

Now, I know that what I just said was a mouthful. How can I say that Jesus would do greater things through His followers, through His representatives on earth than what He accomplished while on the earth...along with all His miracles, what could be greater than His offering Himself as the one and only sacrifice for the sins of His people? I guess you're going to have to just stick around for another few minutes to find out.

So, this morning I would set up our text for you this way: in John 14:12-14 we see Jesus calling and promising His followers to be His representatives, His spokesmen, His tools upon this earth. And, if we would be effective in this task as His representatives, we must know what it is that is required of us. In order to rightly represent Christ requires at least three things as gleaned from our text...

- I. The prerequisite of faith (12a)
- II. The promise of Christ (12b)
- III. The proper prayer perspective (13-14)

Let us spend the rest of our time considering these three requirements and how they ought to manifest themselves in our lives.

I. The prerequisite of faith (12a)

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me...

As we begin, I would have your first notice the emphasis Jesus places upon His followers, calling them to the prerequisite of faith. That this is an emphasis is found in the familiar introduction of **“Truly, truly, I say to you...”** This formula is unique in the gospel of John, used some 25 times, and it is always used by Jesus to capture the attention of His hearers when He wants them to grasp the profound importance and truth of the coming statement. It is like a parent who says, “Look at

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me...” and then proceeds to communicate some statement; or the teacher that says, “Pay attention class!”; or the preacher that might...[pause] use a what is call “a pregnant pause” to peak the congregations’ interest. This is a truth that must be heard, that must be understood, that must be practiced if we are to rightly represent Jesus and so He says, “Truly, truly...”; “Most assuredly...”; “Verily, verily...” “I say to you.”

And next we have the actual prerequisite, the precondition, the needed requirement, the sole qualification of anyone who professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ...he or she must believe in Him. Before the promise is made the qualifier is given that only those who believe in Him can go on to experience the promise.

But we live in an age of easy-believism...the notion that all that is necessary to be called a Christian is to believe that He existed, that He died, that He is the founder of the Church. But as we noted last week, the issue of belief is not grounded in simply knowing some facts about Jesus. The issue of belief is knowing Jesus by experience. The question to be asked is this...does what I know about Jesus actually change my life? Has there been a transformation in my heart that longs to know Him; that longs to imitate Him in all that I do; a transformation that has made me increasingly sensitive and hateful of sin, of anything that is contrary to God and His Word? To believe in Jesus is not so much about what you know about Jesus, but rather is more about how you live for Him.

So, when Jesus captures His hearers’ attention with **“Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me...”**; He is making reference to those who have found comfort, peace and a “different from the world” perspective on life. Jesus has just finished outlining what it means to believe in Him. To believe in Jesus means to know that He has returned to the Father, that He is in Heaven, that He has done all that is necessary to fit those who believe in Him for heaven so that when He returns, He can take us with Him to heaven...to a sinless paradise. Imagine...we who so struggle with sin now, because we believe that Jesus is heaven and will return again, will be fully transformed...sin will one day be completely eliminated from us. But, it is the ever present thought of heaven, the thought of dwelling in the presence of a holy God, that is to currently transform your heart, your mind, your life to live increasing for Him, with His thought and according to His way. To rightly think about heaven is to want to presently see sin more and more eliminated from your life. There is nothing easy about that...to be ever presented with the holiness of God in heaven and to strive, with God’s help to see sin diminished in your life.

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But the Apostle John understood this transforming aspect of believing in Jesus. Look with me at 1 John 2:28-3:3:

28 Now, little children, abide in Him [that is dwell, live according to His standards], so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 29 If you know that He is righteous [the standard by which we are now called to], you know that everyone also who practices righteousness [only a transformed life can do this] is born of Him. 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him [perfected, completely sinless], because we will see Him just as He is. 3 [now note this] And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him [this hope that He will return from heaven to take us to heaven] purifies himself, just as He is pure.

If we are to rightly represent Jesus, we must be constantly transformed and purified with hope of His return from heaven. Does this describe you?

In addition to believing and being transformed by the thought of heaven, Jesus in John 14:6 reminds His followers that we must be transformed by the truth of what he has done for us. Jesus is the way, the means, through His blood on the cross by which we are made fit for heaven. Jesus is the truth, the final and true revelation of what God requires for a person to be saved. And Jesus is the life, the giver of life, not simply physically, but only by Jesus and in Jesus are we made alive to God according to Ephesians 2:4-5. Again, these are facts that can be know, but they are to be truths that are experienced. A person must know that he cannot save himself but needs Jesus as the way. We must lovingly and longing desire to know the truth of the Father by knowing Jesus Christ. And we must come to Jesus to have our lives made alive, transformed, renewed with thinking that glorifies God.

And finally, what it means to believe in Jesus is to be transformed by the reality of who He is, God in the flesh, that Jesus and the Father are one and the same God, that the words Jesus spoke as a man were truly the words of God. And the things that Jesus did while on this earth were truly the works of God. This is what it means to believe in Jesus...does this describe you? This is the prerequisite of faith? Do you meet this condition? Are you being transformed, renewed, worked over, rebuild, refashioned, remodeled continually into the image of Christ? By faith,

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by truly believing in Him, (as Titus 2:12-13 instructs us) to ***"deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."*** This is the prerequisite of faith...does it describe you?

II. The promise of Christ (14:12b)

...the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

After this prerequisite of faith, we come to our second point, the promise of Christ. To hearts that were troubled by the thought that the ministry of Christ was coming to an end, the Lord Jesus assures them that so long as they truly believe in Him, even greater works would be accomplished and what they were seeing as the end was truly the beginning of something the likes of which the world had never seen before.

Of course, the great question that this statement brings is this, "What did Jesus mean by "greater works". Our minds might tend immediately to consider the many miracles of Christ and we might ask ourselves, "Of all that Jesus did, which of His miracles were the greatest? How do we qualify the quality of a miracle? When Jesus calmed the storm with just a word, or turned water, common H₂O into wine, literally creating carbon or sugar and uniting it to the water – were these the greater miracles? When Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fishes or brought healing to the sick – were these the greatest? Or how about when Jesus went to Bethany, just a few days prior to our scene here in John 14, and stood before the tomb of a man who had been dead for four days and called out, "Lazarus, come forth" to have the man who had died come to life right before the eyes of the people? Beloved...name me a miracle that excels that one? Name me a miracle that anyone had done or did after that which was greater? You cannot name me one. To be sure, Elijah raised the widow's son from the dead, and the Apostle Paul raised to life Eutychus (Acts 20:9). But are these any greater? The apostles did many of the same miracles as Jesus, but never greater.

So, what is meant by this promise of Jesus to do greater works than what Jesus had performed? Beloved, the issue here is not about quality, but quantity; not about being greater in excellence, but rather greater in extent. For the greatest work of Jesus Christ is not found in what we normally regard as the miracles or signs of Jesus. Listen, for truly, truly I say to you, that the greatest work of Jesus Christ was revealing the Father; showing people who God is, what He is like; and

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what is needed to be in right relationship with Him. As we read last week, John 1:18 truly reveals the greatest work of Jesus. We read there:

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him [He has made Him know, exegeted, expounded, revealed].

And consider as well the statement of Jesus in His high priestly prayer found in John 17. Let's look at verses 3-4 where Jesus clearly states this purpose of making God known.

3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work [not only salvation, but also making God known] which You have given Me to do.

Okay, so, the great work of Jesus was to make the Father known. How did Jesus do? Consider, when Jesus left this earth, He committed the truth of God and salvation to a little band of eleven men, asking them to carry that message to the ends of the earth. At the time of this commission, how many people in the world had knowledge of God and salvation? Beloved, you could almost count on your hands (a bit of an exaggeration) those who were not bound in the dominion of darkness and heathenism. When Jesus left this earth there were few more than 500 who had followed Him scattered throughout Israel. For three and a half year's efforts, this is what Jesus had to show for it. Most of the preaching of Jesus, as He revealed the Father, was met with hostility and rejection. Jesus never persuaded the masses and from today's standards, His preaching seemed ineffective.

But the promise was that His followers would do even greater works. And just 50 days after Jesus ascended into heaven, something extraordinary happened. On the day of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and prepared them to communicate the truth of God to the masses. On that day, Peter stood up before a crowd of Israelites, those who had been so hostile against Jesus and he preached a crucified and risen Christ according to the plan and purpose of God. And what happened? Some of you know...3000 souls were saved that day. And have you ever stopped to think that in all likelihood, that those 3000 people represent more converts, more followers of Jesus Christ, than Jesus experienced in three and a half years of ministry? Beloved, if we are to rightly represent Jesus, we

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must know and participate in this promise...that we have been called to make God known throughout the earth. Is that not what Jesus said in Acts 1:8?

...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

No, the departure of Jesus was not the end of the activity of His ministry, it was truly just the start of it as He sent out His disciples to preach the gospel. It is remarkable to note that in just three hundred years from Pentecost, Christianity had nearly closed every heathen temple of the Roman Empire.

Beloved, I would remind you that we, like the disciples, are called to such a promise. We are promised to do greater works, if we just believe in Him. I would say to you something I have often communicated from this pulpit – namely that the greatest miracle is not multiplying fishes and loaves or even raising someone from the dead. No, the greatest miracle performed by God and communicated by those who represent Jesus is the miracle of regeneration; the seeing of those who were dead to and for God made alive in Christ Jesus – transformed, made radically and distinctively different from the world. This is the promise of Jesus. This was the experience of the early church and this is to be our experience...communicating to people the gospel of God, the person of Jesus Christ and seeing them saved. The mighty work of conversion is what is in view here. Are you participating in this? Are you living out this promise? Are you speaking to others about who Jesus really is, what it really means to believe in Him? O, Lord, may we be a people who pursue and see these greater works!

III. The proper prayer perspective (14:13-14)

13 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

So, if we are to rightly represent Jesus, we must meet the prerequisite of faith...that is believe in Him and by believe we mean something we experience, something that not only transformed but continues to transform our life making us more and more like Christ; we must know and experience the promise of God to participate in the greater works, that is the bringing of the knowledge of the Father and the gospel of Jesus Christ to people; and finally then, we need a proper prayer perspective. On the heels of this promise to see people won to the gospel, Jesus then says, ***13 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father***

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may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” What a great comfort it is to be to the followers of Jesus to know that He listens to our prayers. But how often is prayer and how to pray and what to pray so misunderstood. Is Jesus giving a blank check to His followers in these verses? Perhaps at one level we can say yes and at another we must say no.

If we are to rightly represent Christ, if we are to be His ambassadors, if we would speak rightly of Him to others; if we would properly live out His life before others, we must know what it is to pray. Jesus will spend some time again on prayer, but for now we are presented with the proper prayer perspective.

Notice that Jesus begins with a grand statement here in verse 13, **“Whatever you ask...”** there is a broadness to this statement, to say the least, but it does not go unqualified as Jesus adds, **“in My name.”** And this is where all the trouble begins, right? What does it mean to pray “in the name of Jesus?” So often it is thought to be merely the salutation of sorts at the end of our prayers. But praying in Jesus’ name speaks of what we have been considering all morning. To pray in Jesus’ name means to come to the Father or speak to the Father...as Jesus’ representative. When we pray we are to pray even as Jesus prayed; even for what Jesus prayed for. When we pray in Jesus’ name, we are claiming to be acting on behalf of Jesus. Now, how does that change your thinking about prayer?

Remember that the departure of Jesus from this earth was not to end the ministry of Jesus, but expand it. And just as Jesus devoted Himself to prayer, petitioning on behalf of others and even for Himself before the Father, we are to come then in like manner, having been given the authority of Jesus to come to God in prayer and ask for things that...and here is the qualifier...are in accordance with His will. This is quite the promise, but it comes with a great responsibility. It is as if Jesus is saying, “Whatever you ask God with My authority or authorization, I will do it.” But this implies that we know and understand what His will is for we cannot ask and expect an answer to anything for which Jesus has not authorized.

I recently was asked to be an administrator for a online photo group. We submit pictures, comment, review, have contests and the like. But as an administrator, I represent the maker of the group. And one of the rules for this group is that there are to be no pictures of children or pets. Some people give the creator of the group a hard time with this and they will sometimes try to get the administrators, like myself, to bend the rule or to try to change the mind of the group’s creator. But I joined the group knowing this rule and it is not my group to change the rules. When I administrate, it is not purely about my likes or dislikes, I represent the creator of the group and when I have to tell someone that their picture

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of rover does not meet the guidelines of the group, I speak with the authority of the creator of the group.

When we pray to God, we are not to ask things in accordance with our whims and fleshly desires, but are to pray those things we have learned from our Lord Jesus Christ; to pray for those things that burdened His heart. These things Jesus has promised to hear and to do.

Soli Deo Gloria

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