

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 provision of Christ John 14:15-24 (Part 4)

“15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me. 25 These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

The other day, while Laura and I were driving around, doing some sightseeing, she began to relate to me a story...the subject of which is not important...but she ended the story with the phrase... “that’s the good news” - after which she paused. Now, perhaps its just me, but when someone says, “that’s the good news and pauses, what do you generally expect to hear next? Yes, that’s right...the bad news! Now in this case, Laura told me there was no “bad news” – but often its seems to be the case that with good news comes bad news. And doesn’t that make sense...how would we really know that news was “good” unless we could compare it to something bad? Even when we say that there is no bad news with our good news, we can certainly think up something bad, can’t we, or even consider something bad that would stand against it.

Let me give you an example. As many of you know, Laura and I had a few days away this week. We stayed in a lovely cabin in Branson. We researched the place to know the amenities, which included a full and modern kitchen as well as a BBQ grill. When we arrived at Branson, we looked at the room and then headed off to the market to buy groceries so that we might cook together. For our main meal, we purchased some lovely rib-eye steaks that I was going to BBQ. We had a delightful day and about 4:30 put in our potatoes for baking and then at 5:30 I went out to fire up the grill....the bad news....there was no propane in the tank. I called the front desk and was informed that this room wasn’t supposed to have a grill and they did not have any propane for it. Plan B. We have a wonderful new oven...perhaps we can broil the steaks. We searched and searched...the bad news...no broil pan. Then I had an idea. I jumped on the internet and looked up how to pan-fry a rib-eye steak. I found a recipe that sounded easy enough and the author said it was wonderfully delicious. So, I got my ingredients together and cranked up the heating element on high.

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I told Laura that it might make some smoke so we opened the front door and rear doors, turned on the fans, being ready for the smoke. The bad news...as I started to cook the steak...the thing smoked like some out of control coal factory. Soon the room was filled with smoke and I knew I was in trouble...how much trouble I didn't know. I was mindful enough to take the smoking pan over to the front door, but the bad news was there was just enough of a breeze to blow all the smoke back into the room, up the cathedral ceiling and enough smoke had collected to create the next bit of bad news...yes, the smoke detector went off. But this was not just any smoke detector...this was a fire alarm smoke detector that set off an alarm that was so piercing we had to run out of the room. Ok...now what. I called the front desk to tell them of my embarrassing event, asking how to get the alarm reset. More bad news...I was told that the Branson fire department was on the way and only they could turn off the alarm after they checked the place.

Now our romantic little dinner was about to be visited by a half dozen fully garbed; oxygen-masked covered firemen. Upon arrival and with the alarm still blazing, my poor little steak now simmering on the back of the stove (no longer smoking), the first words out of the fireman were, “So, did you burn dinner?” With a half-smile and full embarrassment I said, “yes” (although it was not burned...that's some good news). They checked the place out, reset the alarm and...if this is good news, informed me that they come out to these cabins two or three times a week for this...like that was supposed to make me feel better.

It was now about 7 pm...my beautiful rib-eye steak had been simmering in its juices for about 45 minutes and the supposed romantic meal had been turned into an exciting fiasco. After taking a few minutes to recover, we began to laugh and relax. The good news was that the steak didn't taste too bad and our baked potatoes were wonderfully cooked. The meal, while greatly delayed and accomplished in a very unorthodox manner, was memorable. We indeed made a memory for our 20th anniversary. All this reminds me that sometimes bad news just helps you better appreciate the good news.

If you recall, last week we began our look at John 14:21-24 by going all the way back to the Garden of Eden. We noted that God had created for Adam and Eve the perfect environment and the perfect dwelling place for them...but that what made the Garden most perfect was the visible presence of God with them.

But this paradise was lost as Adam and Eve disobeyed the expressly revealed will of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In commanding this, God was not keeping anything good from them, but as you know the story, somehow Adam and Eve believed God was holding something back. Their disobedience resulted in their loss of the daily, visible presence of God in their lives, it brought death into the world, both physical death as well as spiritual death (spiritual death simply being the separating of our spirit with God); and it brought this condition – a propensity, a desire to do things independently from God not only into their lives, but also into those who would be born of them. We call this the sin nature. The bad news is that everyone is born or conceived in sin. It is a disease, which all contract and is 100% fatal. As we are so regularly reminded, all have sinned...all have contracted this disease and all manifest symptoms of this disease and therefore fall short of the glory, the visible and physical presence of God. And, the Scriptures go on to remind us that the wages of sin, the actual

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manifestations of sin...the doing of those things that God hates, the loving the things the world loves results in death...eternal separation from God...an eternity apart from the blissful, delightful, graceful presence of God in order to experience the unimaginable eternal horror of the wrath of God.

All this, our separation from the presence of God was initiated as the result of the disobedience of one man...Adam. And ever since Adam, the vast majority of people have sought a great variety of means to make their way back to God (like the tower of Babel where the people thought they could bridge the gap between them and heaven); or through systems whereby they make themselves seemingly acceptable to God by their own works or merits; or by totally ignoring these truths altogether. But all of these simply continue what we inherited from Adam, a disobedient heart and disobedience always results in separation from the presence of God. Let me say that again, disobedience, whether done knowingly or unknowingly always results in a separation from God. And a life of continual disobedience, or one characterized by disobedience will always result in eternal separation from the presence of God. The Bible calls this condition as being dead in our trespasses and sin.

This is some bad news. So then, is there a remedy? Is there some good news? You know there is good news...the good news begins this way, that just as sin and death entered into the world by the disobedience of the one man Adam resulting in the loss of the presence of God in one's life, so now righteousness, that is being right with God and life have entered into the world by the obedience of the One man Jesus Christ resulting in the restoration of the presence of God in one's life. The remedy to the condition of sin is to no longer remain in the likeness of your father Adam...a disobedient sinner, but to be found in the likeness of your Brother, Jesus Christ, an obedient servant. Remember that Jesus has eternally been God, the Second person of the Trinity, and according to Philippians 2:7-8, the eternal God,

"emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Jesus demonstrated that unlike Adam, of whom we are all born, He was always obedient to the expressly revealed will of God. In Adam all we have is death...in Christ even in death we have life. But the question then is this...in whom are you found? In Adam or in Christ? Or to put it another way, of these two men one of which God has declared represents you...in whose image, in whose likeness, in whose character or behavior are you most like? Adam or Christ?

As we have been looking at John 14:21-24, we have been considering the great promise of Christ, that the presence of not only God the Holy Spirit (John 14:17) and not only God the Son (John 14:20), but now also the very presence of God the Father would be the experience, would be the privilege; would be the reality of the believer in Jesus Christ (John 14:21-24). In these verses we learn that Jesus promises the presence of God to dwell in those who have "not let their heart be troubled; [who] believe in God [and] believe also in [Jesus]." But the question before us is this... "how do we know the reality of the presence of God in our lives"? Beloved, Jesus is emphatic; Jesus is repetitive; Jesus has a continual theme by which He wants His disciples, by which He longs for you and me to know with certainty the reality of the presence of God in our

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lives. Before Christ is in our lives, before we had faith to believe in Him, to trust what He has said He has done for us; to know that we were disobedient sinners headed for hell, our lives are characterized by Adam, by disobedience, by pursuing what we want, when we want it how we want it. From Adam we desire to live independently from God and at best approach the commandments of God with a pick-and-choose mentality. But when Christ has truly come into our lives, something changes; we learn to love Christ, to seek the highest good and glory of Christ and according to John 14:15, the best demonstration of loving Christ and therefore of having His presence in us is what...keeping His commandments. Commandments, notice its plural. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus would say that we are to teach other to obey all that Jesus had commanded, not just some of what He commanded. And as we saw last week in John 14:21-22, the reality of the presence of God in our lives is first realized as we pursue obedience to Christ. When we willingly and with delight pursue obedience to the word of Christ, we have this as a proof of our love to Him, it become our assurance of the Father's love for us and it results in a further knowledge of Jesus Christ in our lives. That was our first consideration of the reality of the presence of God in our lives. This morning, coming to verse 23, I would like to look at the second way in which these verses tell us of the reality of the presence of God in our lives...We experience the reality of the presence of God....

II. As a result of the promise of Christ (14:23-24)

In verse 23 we read words similar to those of verse 21, yet with an important addition. We read, ***“Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”***

Jesus promises that the one who is obedient...the one who passionately pursues those things God and Christ has commanded...these will have the presence of God in their lives! This statement is in response to the question of Judas back in verse 22. Jesus does not really address the question of Judas from verse 22 directly. At issue was not physical Kingdom of Jesus Christ, but rather we find once again an emphasis - that to experience the promise of the presence of God, obedience (this passionate desire to please God, to live in full accord with His word) is the key. Beloved, we must note that it is God who instills this desire in a person and so this becomes the key evidence that the presence of the Godhead in one's life. For from this verse we see that the whole Trinity has been mentioned as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all actively engaged and present in the believer's life.

Jesus says again, ***“If anyone loves Me (not just the disciples), he will keep my words (obedience), and My Father will love him (will seek his highest good, even at the cost of His own Son's life on the cross) and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.***

Or to say this another way, if anyone is experiencing the desire for the highest good and glory of God in his life, the natural result, the qualifying proof is keeping His Word...of this passion to please God in and with one's life. And then, when we are experiencing this love and this obedience, we can and must know that the Father Himself loves us and not only does He love us, but both the Son and the Father determine to dwell, to make their abode, to live within that believer's heart. Can you begin to fathom the richness of this promise? When we are obedient to Christ, we know we love God and God loves us and we have the promise that God will dwell in us. Already in 14:17 have believer's been promised the indwelling Spirit. And in 14:20 we have

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the promise of Christ in us. And now, we have the promise of both Christ and the Father dwelling in us. We see this teaching that God dwells in us with the picture of the temple. In 1 Corinthians 6:19 we read of the Holy Spirit's presence,

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

And then in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 6:16 we read these words concerning the presence of God in us.

1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

2 Corinthians 6:16

...For we are the temple of the living God;

And finally we read in Ephesians 2:21-22 that we are a temple of the Lord Jesus Christ and we see again all members of the Trinity in this passage:

Ephesians 2:19-22

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

So, when we read Jesus' statement, "***We will come to him and make Our abode with him...***" we see the promise that if we are in right relationship to Jesus Christ, if we have looked to Him to be our redeemer, our new head and representative in the place of Adam, to receive from Jesus, life rather than the death we inherited from Adam, then the presence of the Trinity, of the Godhead, namely that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are with you and in you becomes our reality.

Oh the consequences of this thought, of this truth. I am a temple of the living God. He has chosen to reside in me! My life now is to be one of service to Him; just as the priests served God in a temple of stone and mortar, now I have the greater privilege of serving God in and through this temple of flesh and bone. How am I doing? Am I offering the parts of my body, both visible and invisible, not only my eyes, my hands and my legs but also my heart and mind to the pursuit of the highest good and glory of God. For when I am, this is how I know that that presence of God is in me. This is how I know that I am loved by the Father and the Son. This is how I know that I in fact love the Son because God is producing in me obedience, this passionate desire to please God, to live in full accord with His Word and by this I also am promised that God will dwell, will walk will be with me.

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In verse 24, Jesus, in order to be clear and to emphasize the importance of obedience as it relates to our experiencing the presence of God, states the issue in the negative. The one whose life is characterized by disobedience, who does not seek the highest good and glory of God, is the one who does not love Jesus. So then, for the one who is disobedient, this one will lack the proof, this assurance, this certainty of love for Jesus and therefore of His love for him.

This does not necessarily mean that such a one is not loved of God, but he certainly can have no assurance of it. It is this constant pursuit of obedience however that gives us the knowledge of our love of God and of God's love for us. Yes we will fail from time to time and so long as we live in this flesh, the question will not be, “Are you living in perfect obedience, for we cannot; but rather, are you living in the pursuit of obedience?” Is obedience what you long for? When you see or are confronted with your sinfulness; when you see that you have lied, or hated, or disobeyed a parent or cheated, or stole something from work, or felt pride or arrogance that you cry out for grace that you might be strengthened to say “no” to such behavior and to pursuit godliness. This is the pursuit of obedience and such a pursuit is the evidence of the promise of the presence of God in your life. Additionally, and to make this most practical...how is your love life? According to 1 John 5:1-2, **“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and whoever love the Father love the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.”** And what is the commandment? In 1 John 4:7 we read, **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”**

How is your love life...do you love the saints? Do you long for the fellowship of the saints or...and listen carefully, do you neglect or slight the saints...I want to be humble yet firm in this statement. I am concerned that so many fail to avail themselves to the first Sunday of the month practice of communion, an important and most emphasized commandment of Jesus Christ. I am concerned by those of us who fail to see the importance of our fellowship after the morning service by the sharing of a meal. I realize that it may not work for everyone, every week; and my concern is not about attendance, but about attitude. In Acts 2:42, our Lord commands the corporate time of teaching, as we are doing now; He commands the corporate time of fellowship as we will do shortly; the corporate time of breaking bread, which we do once a month and the corporate time of prayer, which we do at various times and locations throughout the month. Let me ask you...are you keeping these commandments? Does this reflect at all upon your love for Jesus? To love Jesus is not only to be loved by the Father and to experience the presence of the Father, but it is also then to love the saints and to experience the presence of the saints. Please consider such things carefully not as a placing of guilt upon another, but as a loving exhortation to evaluate the depth of your love and devotion to Christ. For again, as you rightly love and obey Christ, by this you will more full experience the presence of God in your life. Is this not what we long for the fullness of the presence of God in our lives...then let us learn full obedience to Christ and work on those things we know Christ has called us to do.

And as we close, please note that where this promise actually originates. It is not of earthly origin. It is not the word of Jesus, the Son of Man alone, but it is the word of God, the word of Him who sent Jesus to be the Savior. All this reminds us that we did not love God first, but we love because, as according to 1 John 4:19, He first loved us and first demonstrated to us what love is, this seeking the highest good of another regardless of the cost. Our highest good is

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to be fit for the presence of God. The sin we inherited from Adam and the sin in which we for so long lived in, rendered us unfit for God's presence. But at the cost of the Son of God, dying on the cross, being punished for the sins of His people, this highest good has been restored and for those who believe in Christ and on Christ as demonstrated by their obedience to Christ, these have the precious promise of the presence of God and the love of God.

Let us pursue then obedience to Christ, of a life that passionately desires to please Him and live according to His word; and let us rejoice in the promise of Christ, that God lives in us, directing us and leading us to be holy.

Soli Deo Gloria

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