

John on Jesus - On Mission

June 9, 2013

Welcome to Faith Church. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. As a church, we are studying the Gospel of John. This morning, we are in John 14. Take out your Bible and find the chapter. In the pew Bibles, it is page 900.

This portion of John is called the Upper Room Discourse. Jesus was finished with his public work. In a few hours, he was crucified. He spent his last hours with his disciples teaching them how to live when he was gone. He was preparing them to stay on the mission, the mission of reconciling the world to God through Jesus. This morning, as we study Jesus' words, they are given to us by God to prepare us to stay on the mission, the mission of reaching our community with the Gospel. The mission of reconciling our particular piece of real estate, on planet Earth, to God the Father. This is especially appropriate for us as we have Pastor Jordan on board and are preparing to open our new campus in the Spencer community. We need to be on mission and know the promises Jesus makes to us as we face this challenging task.

What the disciples thought would be a celebratory dinner to relish their newly-discovered fame in the Triumphal Entry suddenly took an ominous turn. During the meal, Jesus began to physically tremble. The trembling in his body was matched by the shakiness in his voice as he told them that one of them, a trusted friend in that room, would betray him to death. There was a double agent amongst them. Those words do not aid digestion, rather, they made anyone sick

to their stomachs. In that moment, I am sure everyone lost their appetites. Everyone exchanged glances as they tried to find the guilt-ridden face of a traitor.

Peter even played charades with the apostle John. John was seated next to Jesus while Peter was across the room. Peter sent him hand signals telling him to find out from Jesus the identity of the slime bucket that was about to stab their best friend in the back. I think Peter was planning on jumping the guy and using his fishing knife to take him out at the meal. That was the type of guy Peter was, impulsive and fiercely loyal to his friends, especially to his best friend, Jesus.

Most of us know how the story unfolds. Jesus gave Judas a piece of friendship bread, then Judas took the bread, which was a way, in that culture, of pledging loyalty to a friend. While he pledged loyalty on the outside, on the inside, he was filled with wickedness. He immediately left to betray the Christ. Judas was so slick about his betrayal that even after he left, nobody expected the traitor was him.

Once Judas left, Jesus began teaching his disciples about leaving them. He was leaving to prepare a place they could not come, at least not at first. This is where we pick up the story. Peter, the poster child of fierce loyalty, gave a pledge-of-allegiance to Jesus, only to have it backfire.

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." John 13:36–38 (ESV)

Peter was pledging his loyalty to Jesus. He claimed he was ready to lay down his life for Jesus. Jesus just sucked the wind right out of his sails. “Before morning, you will deny even knowing me three times.” If that doesn’t put a pause in a conversation, I don’t know what would. This left Peter, the guy who always had something to say, completely speechless for the next four chapters.

Let me just stop and apply this. Many of us are just like Peter. We think we are more committed to Christ than we actually are. How many of us have promised Jesus we wouldn’t fail him but under pressure we cracked quicker than a light bulb dropped on the kitchen floor. When we fail Jesus, we are so disgusted with ourselves. How can God keep loving and forgiving us when, under pressure, we keep failing?

Peter’s story is a great encouragement for those who fail Christ, which is everyone in the room. In this story, there is an intentional contrast between Judas and Peter. They both fail Jesus, but they fail differently. Judas’ failure led to shame and death. Peter’s failure led to restoration and life. What was the difference? When Judas failed Jesus, in his shame *he ran from Jesus*. When Peter failed Jesus he repented and *ran to Jesus*. Jesus forgave him and restored him and even used him as the leader of the early church. Church history tells us Peter did eventually die for Jesus. He was crucified upside down because he didn’t want to be crucified in the same position as his Lord and Savior. We will all fail Jesus. When you fail, don’t be a Judas and, in shame, run from Jesus. Be a Peter and, in repentance, run to Jesus. Jesus will forgive you. He will restore you and use you, even when you fail him again and again.

Let's get back to the story. As you can imagine, the tension in the room was so thick you could cut it with a knife. Nobody knew the identity of the betrayer. Peter, the outspoken, courageous, redneck of the group promised to stand by Jesus to the bitter end. Jesus popped his balloon by telling him he would turn into a coward and deny even knowing Jesus three times before sunrise..

At this point, the rest of the disciples were freaking out. "If Peter will fail Jesus that splendidly, the rest of us are toast." That is why Jesus said:

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." John 14:1 (ESV)

The word for troubled is the same word used in the last chapter to describe Jesus' physical trembling. It is also used to describe the sobbing of Jesus at Lazarus' tomb and the trembling of his body in the Garden of Gethsamene when he sweat drops of blood. We are talking serious emotions. Everyone around the table was getting upset. Nobody was eating. Dinner was over. People were grabbing for their Roloids. Folks were nauseous at the thought of what was about to happen.

Listen to how Jesus got the situation under control. He said, "If you believe in God, believe also in me. Guys, listen to what I am going to tell you. Trust me on this one."

"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." John 14:2-4 (ESV)

Jesus used the metaphor of a great big house to describe heaven. He told them that he was leaving them to prepare their rooms in God's big house. This is not a Micro-Tel with mirrors on the wall to make it look spacious. He was talking about heaven. Heaven is not just a spacious place but Jesus says each one of us will have a special place in God's house, custom prepared for each one of us by Jesus.

When we think about death, we need to add to our understanding of the afterlife that Jesus is preparing a special place for each one of us, and when we get there, he hands us our room key. Don't think boring. Jesus was a carpenter on earth. I am sure he will do an excellent job of overseeing this construction project in heaven.

The problem with this metaphor is we think of a room, we think of a hotel room. That is not what Jesus was teaching. He told them he is preparing their home.

While I am filled with thankfulness for a nice office, I love my home much better. There is something better about home. I can take my shoes off. I can raid the refrigerator and eat the hot wings and tacos my kids bring home as leftovers. When Cindy cooks a meal and the smell permeates the house, home just feels right. Home is the place I belong. Home is for family. We feel rejuvenated at home. The good feelings of home, the smell of apple pie in the kitchen and family around the dinner table, were all given to us by God as an appetizer for the much greater feeling of home we will have when we get to

heaven. Heaven will feel much more like home than our home ever felt like home here.

Jesus promised that, while he was leaving, he would come back and bring them to where he is so they can be together again. He promises that for each of us.

So while their tight friendship, a friendship that was as close as family, would be broken up, it would only be temporary. Jesus will come back, and bring them to the reunion at his Father's big house in heaven. Then Jesus said something unexpected, "*...and you know the way to get there.*"

Thomas was dumbfounded. A reunion party sounded like a good plan but, "No, I don't know how to get there. I have no idea on the directions. You didn't give us a map. I would like GPS coordinates. If you can't give us coordinates, at least a hand drawn map on a cocktail napkin would help." Maybe Thomas is just dumber than a box of rocks. I don't know. He completely missed that Jesus was not talking about a place he could drive to in the family mini-van.

Here is the map. It wasn't the kind of map Thomas expected.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." John 14:6-7 (ESV)

Jesus said, "You want to be at the big reunion? You want to join me at the big house where my dad is in charge and I have a room custom prepared for you? You want to be at the place that is family and feels more like home than home ever felt before? No GPS coordinates are necessary. You get there through me. I am the way to my Father's house. By the way, there is no other

way to my Father's house." There is no plan B. God is not Baskin Robbins where you get to choose between 31 different flavors. Jesus said, "There is only one way and that is me."

This verse sets people's hair on fire. Our world loves religion. You have your religion. I have my religion. You have no right to say your religion is better than my religion. Everybody is entitled to their own religious opinion. We believe all opinions about God are equally right, which, while it sounds loving, makes absolutely no sense. Think about this. In the Old Testament, one of the false God's the Israelites fell into worshipping was a god of their neighbors called Molech. Molech told you take your baby and throw him/her into a stone skillet that was blisteringly hot because it was set over a roaring fire. It was a gruesome death to see a child scalded to death. All religions are not the same. Molech told you to sauté your child to make him happy. Jesus said, "Bring the little children unto me because to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." I am sorry but all religions are not the same. Some of you think that is just freaky Old Testament stuff and we are more sophisticated today. Not true.

Islam tells people the only way they can be guaranteed heaven from Allah is if they die in a jihad. A jihad is killing non-Muslims for Allah. Jesus says you are to love your enemy and wash his or her feet. Allah says blow them up. I am sorry; all religions are not the same. Some of you think this comparison is unfair because I am talking about radical Islam and real Islam is not that way at all. Not true. In Islam, there are five pillars to earn your salvation with Allah. These include praying multiple times a day toward Mecca, giving money to the

poor, making a pilgrimage to Mecca, just to name three of the five. Islam is a list of things you do for God. The logo for Islam is a scale. Hopefully, your good deeds will outweigh your bad deeds. Then, if Allah is having a bad day, he will punish you irrespective of how you lived. The logo for Christianity is a cross. Jesus died in our places, for our sins because it is about what God has done for us. Islam is about what we must do for God. Sounds to me like they are completely opposite! By the way, I am not trying to pick on Islam. The same is true for all the other religions of the world. They are all enslaving lists about what you do for God to earn his favor. The message of the Bible is we cannot do enough or be good enough. Each of us is too messed up. If you think you are not messed up, spend more time looking in the mirror. The good news is what God has done for us. He loves us. He sent his son to die for us. He completely forgives us. He sends his Holy Spirit inside us to transform us. All religions on one side. They are all lists of what we must do for God. The Bible is on the other saying, "Look what God has done for you." Do you see the difference?

All religions are not the same. This is why Jesus is the only way. No plan B. Every other religion is demonically-inspired and has Satan behind it. They are intended to enslave us. Jesus came to free us.

Most people don't believe this. One survey I read by the Pew Forum said 57 percent of evangelical church attendees believe many religions lead to eternal life. Seventy percent of Americans with a religious affiliation shared the view.¹

¹ <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Church/Default.aspx?id=150084>, June 24, 2008.

I know some of you are saying, “This is why people hate Christians. They come off as so narrow-minded and egotistical.” Guess what, you are right. We are narrow-minded, because Jesus was narrow-minded. All we do is be honest about Jesus’ words. I don’t have the right to change what he said. If you have an issue with Jesus’ exclusivity, take it up with Jesus, don’t take it up with me. I just put my finger in the text.

I know this causes some people to hate us. We don’t hate them. We love them. We wash their feet, just like Jesus did for Judas. We don’t love the false religions of the world that are all satanically-inspired but we love the people of the world, just like Jesus taught us.

Now, Philip has a question.

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” John 14:8 (ESV)

Philip had a hard time believing this. It is a serious mental stretch to think the guy you slept next to for three years is the only way to God and is the key to the universe. Philip needs a little help with his faith, which I think, is completely understandable. Philip obviously went to a AWANA because he remembered his Old Testament. Moses needed a little help with his faith so he asked to see God the Father. God the Father didn’t let Moses see him because nobody can see God the Father and live, but God the Father still helped him with his faith. God the Father passed in front of Moses and he let Moses see the after-glow of his passing. Philip said, “Introduce us to God the Father. If you could do that, my faith is fixed. My doubts are over. Hook me up with an experience like Moses and I am all-in.”

I love the way Jesus responded.

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.” John 14:9–11 (ESV)

Jesus is a little torqued at Philip for the question. He looked at him and said, “You have been with me three years. How many times do we need to go over this? I am in the Father and the Father is in me. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. Everything I did is exactly what the Father wanted me to do. There is no airspace between us. You want a vision of God you can live through? You just had one for the last three years. Look at the miracles. The miracles were things only God could do. The reason I did them is because I am God. Hello, McFly! Think about this!”

What was Philip’s problem? Familiarity. Philip was hanging out with Jesus too long. He got used to miracles and Jesus’ teaching. Some of us are the same way. Christ has become so familiar to us we are no longer amazed by him and what he has done. This is especially true if you were raised in church. You’ve heard the Bible stories so many times they sound boring. Jesus is, in your mind, very manageable and very tame. Anybody grow up like that? This was Philip’s problem.

How did Jesus handle this? He tells Philip to look afresh at his life. Look at his words. Look at his works. Look at his miracles. Who else could Jesus be but God in the flesh?

Some of us are overly familiar with Jesus. We are like Philip. That is our homework this week. Look at Jesus again. Reconsider what he has done.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12 (ESV)

This is a verse that is often misunderstood. It sounds like Jesus’ ministry on Earth was second rate. If we believe in Jesus, we can improve on Jesus’ resume. Personally, I think Jesus has a resume that is hard to improve on --- virgin born, healed hundreds miraculously, fed 5,000 off a single Happy Meal, raised people from the dead, conquered death, sits at the right hand of God, will return to judge the living and the dead. I don’t feel confident any of us can top this. What is Jesus talking about when he says we will do greater works?

First, we need to understand Jesus’ work. He was serving. He was loving. He was proclaiming the good news of the Gospel. The miracles were there to aide him in his work, they were not his work.

What is this greater work we will do because Jesus went to the Father? Jesus was not talking about the magnitude of our works. Jesus was talking about the multitude of the workers. When Jesus limited himself to a human body, he chose to limit himself to one place at a time. In a few verses, Jesus will begin telling them about the Holy Spirit that he was sending to be with them and in them in his absence. When Jesus left them and went to heaven, he was at the right hand of God. He sent the Holy Spirit that indwells us, guides us and empowers us. Just as Jesus was in the Father and the Father was in him, when

we become a Christian, the Son sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, to empower us and to guide us to do the works that Jesus was doing.

Except now, instead of Jesus being in one place to do one work at a time, the Holy Spirit dwells within each of us and we are a scattered multitude with the Holy Spirit leading and guiding us, like God led and guided Christ. So the greater work here is not the *magnitude* of the specific works but the *multitude* of the workers.

In the early church, people were called Christians. You need to know that was not a compliment. It was a cut down. It was society's way of saying you are all a bunch of little Jesuses running around acting like him and doing his work. While society meant that as a cut down, the church loved it because that was the goal, to live like Jesus and to do the works Jesus was doing. It adopted the name Christians as a badge of honor.

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. John 14:13–14 (ESV)

Here is another misused and misunderstood verse. It makes God sound like the cosmic genie. Rub the bottle. The password is Jesus. Your wish will be his command. As long as you ask things in Jesus' name, we can make God do what we want.

So in Jesus' name I ask for a 4.0 GPA. In Jesus' name I ask for a new car and a cute girlfriend. In Jesus' name I pray to lose 10 pounds --- sounds like a divine diet plan with guaranteed results. When we pray this way and it doesn't happen, we think God is failing us. What is going on?

In context, Jesus was talking about them continuing the mission of reconciling the world to God through Christ. Pray for what you need to continue the mission. He guaranteed the mission would move forward. He doesn't guarantee all prayers for anything we want. These are prayers that the Father would be glorified in the Son as we continue Christ's work. They are not prayers that we would be drafted by a pro football team. God may answer that prayer, but he doesn't guarantee it.

The default setting we have for our prayer life is praying for our own glory. God, make me make varsity. Make me beautiful. Make me rich. Make me smart. Jesus said to pray about things that promote God's reputation and Christ's glory, not our own reputations and glory. That is the mission God is on. He will answer those prayers.

As we pray for God to answer those prayers, we need to remember that while God promises to answer prayers for the advancement of his glory and Christ's name, he doesn't promise to always answer those prayers in the way we expect. Sometimes, he will bring glory to his name in a way we didn't expect by doing exactly the opposite of what we were praying for. We need to leave God room to answer things in his way.

[And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 1 John 5:14 \(ESV\)](#)

Conclusion

Jesus had his disciples over for dinner. He was preparing them for his departure. He was preparing them to continue the mission he began, of reconciling people to his Father.

He first shocked his disciples by telling them he was going away to heaven, but he is preparing a special place for each one of them. Even though we are breaking up for a little while, don't lose sight of the great reunion we are heading for.

To keep them on mission, he told them the way to get there. It is the only way to get there, through Jesus. He is the way.

To keep them on mission and empower them for mission, he told them about the Holy Spirit he would send in his absence that would empower them, and us, to continue the mission.

When they, and us, come across obstacles to the mission, remember we are not alone. Pray in Jesus' name for his fame and glory. Jesus, who is at the Father's side will be the advocate for our prayer to help us so the mission will continue.

What was true of the apostles then is still true for each of us today. We are on a mission from God to reconcile the people of our community to God the Father through Jesus. God promises to empower us to do the works he was doing. When we come to God in prayer, through Jesus' name, God the Father will hear us and respond. As we close, we think about the task of opening another campus and of reaching our community. They are overwhelming tasks.

I think it is appropriate that we apply this Scripture, come before God in prayer, in the name of Jesus, asking for the leadership of the Holy Spirit to help us accomplish the mission given us by Christ, the mission of sharing the Gospel in the Lakes region, especially in the towns of Spirit Lake and Spencer.

Let's pray.



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