

<b>Series:</b> Portraits of Jesus	<b>Reference:</b> <i>John 14</i>	<b>Title:</b> The Encourager	<b>Date:</b> 05.10.2020
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
As Jesus prepares to leave His Disciples, He promises two things. Firstly, hope for the future, and secondly, help in the present. Let's see what that means together in John 14 today.			

We're seeing Jesus in His last moments, choosing not to take on the world as WE would, but to change the world through loving those closest to Him in His last hours. Turn with me to John 14...today, John paints the portrait of Jesus the Encourager. There's too much in Chapter 14 to do it justice, but we'll do a fly over picking out the most important.

Jesus encourages His disciples in two ways. Firstly, there is hope for the future, and secondly, there is help in the present. We must remember, He's saying this all in the context of Him 'leaving' the Disciples.

They've left so much for Him, jobs, friends, families & even reputation. Imagine being a Jew during that time following a guy claiming to be God. It was social suicide. They've come to rely on, trust, love & expect great things from Him. It's not crossed their minds He'd leave.

I remember graduating high school, within weeks everyone seemed to dissipate. They all went off on vacation, or early to college & I was left alone. Change is difficult & when people go away, we often feel great loss. That pit in your stomach when just a day before you had things to do, having dinner, hanging out, talking, enjoying & learning together, but people leave & there is an ominous silence in your life - we've felt it now with Social Distancing.

After the Tsunami in Aceh, I sat with a guy whose whole extended family had been killed by the wave. He was the only one left. What a devastating blow to have your entire bloodline cut off.

I often listen to people who experience the loss of a parent, the gut wrenching feelings associated with it. That's what these guys are looking into at this moment - worse than any loss they'd ever experience, worse than the loss of a parent. The loss of the most central person in their lives, the one which Peter himself confessed to be the Son of God.

They're now peering into that abyss. Imagine giving up so much to follow Jesus, leaving family, friends, reputation & your fishing nets behind. You've become reliant on His teaching & presence, something about His presence makes the world okay. Soon your Teacher would go away & you would be left to stand on your own.

When He's finally nailed to the cross, you might look around & ask, "Did I make a mistake? I gave up everything & there He is hanging on a tree, dead! What have I done!?" They need encouragement in this new stage of ministry.

It's in this context Jesus begins by saying...*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup>You know the way to the place where I am going."*

But Thomas reveals to us right away the feelings of the crowd...*<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"*

Listen to that question in context. It's not a question of place, but relationship - in asking where, Thomas is really saying, I don't want to be without you! You've become my life, what will I do if you go away! How can I be assured everything's going to be okay!? That's the true question. And...*<sup>6</sup>Jesus answered, "I am the way & the truth & the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him & have seen him."*

A missionary tells how he was taking the gospel to a new tribe. He arrived at a village, a point beyond which his porters would go. The missionary appealed to the local chief for someone who could act as his guide to the distant northern tribe. The chief summoned a man, tall, battle scarred, carrying a large axe.

A bargain was made & the next morning the missionary set off through the bush, following his new guide. The way became increasingly rough & the path had all but disappeared. There was an occasional mark blazed on a tree, the path was narrow. Finally the missionary said stop. He asked the guide if he was sure he knew the way. The man pulled himself up to his full height. He said, "You see this axe in my hand? You see these scars on my body? With this axe I blazed the trail to the village to which we go. I came from there. These scars I received when I made the way of which you ask, do you know the way? Before I came, there was no way. I am the way."

That's exactly what Jesus says to us here - I made the way, know the way, am the way & I'll be with you on the way to your future hope. Maybe not here in the flesh, but in a new & better way. Yet that's the statement which sets Jesus apart, the exclusivity of His message - He's the way, the truth & the life, no one comes to the Father except through Him! It's the statement so many stumble over.

However, let's use a little logic. Orthodoxy & tradition tell us the Trinity's three persons, one essence. The best worldly image I can come up with are notes on a piano. Each note on a piano is made up of 3 strings. Those 3 strings are perfectly tuned to one another, so although there are three, when that hammer strikes them they produce one note which resonates in our chest.

This is precisely why Jesus says back in chapter 13...<sup>20</sup> *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*"

Trinity's expressed in that verse, 3 persons, one essence, one God. No single work done in this world is exclusive to one person of the Trinity - they work together as one essence, one note. You know the Father because you know Jesus, Thomas.

Jesus continues this conversation with Philip...<sup>8</sup>*Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father & that will be enough for us."* <sup>9</sup>*Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* <sup>10</sup>*Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.* <sup>11</sup>*Believe me when I say that I am in the Father & the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.*

So some see Jesus claim as the only way to the Father as exclusive. Let's consider what others may deem as a negative exclusive statement on His part as a positive logical argument for the unique personhood of God.

For instance, if I were President, there'd only be one me. I'd govern this nation, make laws, lead out of conviction & heart. I'd lead out of who I am. If you wanted to come under my leadership & you weren't a citizen, you'd need to forgo your citizenship elsewhere, become American, pledging allegiance to my leadership as President.

I can't be other than who I am. If you know me, you know Jason as a unique person. I can't make myself into someone else, it wouldn't be true to who I am. I couldn't be a dictator of another country, or govern a communist state, since the principles held in those systems don't reflect who I am in character & conviction.

Those who say there are many ways to God tend to forget that if God's real, then He has personhood. Personhood is who He is, unique to Him. He can only be expressed in one way, as He is. To express Himself otherwise would be to compromise His character & being.

Christianity is exclusive in its claim to come & follow the one True God, but totally open in invitation to do so. Jesus' exclusive statement ceases to be negative & becomes a positive statement by a loving God based on who He is as He pursues the world. A God who's revealed Himself in the only way He's able, there can be no other. And that's seen ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus, the Godhead says, "I'm alive, real, here, this is who I am, this is what I expect & you are all invited in, but you must leave your citizenship of other kingdoms behind! Leave the kingdoms of fear & control, enter the kingdom of love & grace."

That's not because He's horrible & controlling, rather He's absolutely loving & oil & water don't mix, you can't have two masters. Dual citizenship isn't possible in the kingdom of God. You'll not find the true living God expressed in other religious systems since He, limited by His own nature, has chosen to reveal Himself in the person of Jesus. Other religions may reflect some truth, but aren't the Truth.

Everyone's invited into the true kingdom of Grace via Jesus. To say there are many ways to God, meaning all religions lead to God, is naive at best & dishonest at worst - it reveals we don't understand what various religions teach.

Because when you study, you realize the character of God in them isn't the same - if God is one, then God's character can only be expressed in one way. The God of the Bible is so vastly different than all other religions.

As C.S. Lewis once pointed out, the distinctive difference from Christianity as compared to the rest is Grace. In all other religions the person must save themselves - but in Christianity it's a rescue mission of & by God alone.

These disciples have walked with God the Son. They've rubbed elbows, ate, talked & struggled with Him. In doing so they've met the Father who extends future hope - even though Jesus leaves, they know the Father because they know the Son. It's not necessarily about going to a place, as they used to go to the Tabernacle, or Temple, to experience the presence of God, but God will now dwell within them.

They'll move from the idea of a holy building, to a holy people. Before Jesus, God used to dwell with people via the Temple, then Jesus came to dwell with them via the incarnation, and a time will soon come for His disciples where God will dwell with them via the Holy Spirit. The people will become the dwelling place of God through God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it isn't necessarily where they go, but who they walk with - it's not about place, but relationship. There's future hope, God will not abandon.

A future hope, and help in the present, v12...<sup>12</sup>*Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.* <sup>13</sup>*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* <sup>14</sup>*You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

But how will we do greater things? How will we ask you when you're leaving!?! He answers that question...<sup>15</sup> *"If you love me, keep my commands.* <sup>16</sup> *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—* <sup>17</sup> *the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you & will be in you.* <sup>18</sup> *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.* <sup>19</sup> *Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.* <sup>20</sup> *On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.* <sup>21</sup> *Whoever has my*

*commands & keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them & show myself to them.”*

Think this through...sure there's hope for the future, Jesus promises to come back & gather them to a place He's prepared. That's almost easier to swallow, but His leaving - how can that be good now? How will they survive without Him?

Later on in John 16:7 He says it's better that He goes, otherwise the Advocate wouldn't come. So, in light of what we just said earlier about dwelling - we must realize, in the Incarnation, Jesus the man was limited in the flesh. However, as Jesus ascends from the earth, this somehow opens the door for Him to dwell with His disciples via the Holy Spirit. Notice how the language passes back & forth - the Holy Spirit's in them, Jesus will be in them too - since the persons of the Trinity all work as one essence - to have the Spirit is to have Jesus & to have Jesus is to have the Father.

He continues this thought in verse 23 when He says...*“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup>Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*

God making his home with us, dwelling with & in us. So, although Jesus goes away for a time in the flesh, the fullness of God is right with & even in us in the form of God the Holy Spirit - and that's exactly what Jesus promises here. V25...<sup>25</sup>*“All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled & do not be afraid.*

There the disciples are, looking into the inevitable loss they'll experience & Jesus gives them a hope for the future. Of a place prepared for them where, as it says in Revelation 21:3-4...<sup>4</sup>*“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

A place where Revelation 21:27 says...<sup>27</sup>*“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

An exclusive invitation yes, but not in the sense of shutting out. Everyone's invited to the party thrown by God, but it's *His* invitation. True to His character, there's only one invitation given, one door to get in, through Jesus - the only name given by which we're saved.

Yet, as we wait for that party, we've been given all we need now. God the Holy Spirit comes & where the Spirit is, there's freedom. As we continue this journey of faith, God the Spirit dwells within us & as 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 says...<sup>10</sup>*“these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of*

*God. <sup>11</sup>For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup>What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. <sup>13</sup>This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. <sup>14</sup>The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. <sup>15</sup>The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, <sup>16</sup>for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

Our spiritual formation's the ongoing process of the triune God transforming our lives & character toward the life & character of Jesus accomplished by the ministry & power of the Spirit in the context of biblical community. In the Holy Spirit we have the mind of Christ.

We might think Jesus went away, will return in the 'last days' & that He's now preparing a place for us there when we read these verses. Rather, look at this differently, Jesus went away for those three days after His crucifixion, prepared a place for us, then returned & through the ministry of the Holy Spirit He guides us constantly to our future hope.

There's hope for the future, but maybe more importantly, there's help in the present - help in the form of God the Spirit dwelling within us. The Spirit who gives us the mind of Christ, leading us to remember & live out of His words. An awesome thought.

Yet, the Spirit, as a person, can be grieved & ignored. Or, it can be a relationship nurtured & enjoyed. Your choice which, yet it'd be tragic to not pursue that relationship. God within you...how can you go wrong? We think Jesus went away & will come back at the last days. However, what if He meant He'd go away for those three days in death, prepare a place for us, then return as our guide to future hope?

We often neglect this Holy Spirit of future hope & present help - our Christology almost becomes idolatrous when we neglect the fact that the Trinity's one essence, acting together. We fear being wrong so we grieve the Spirit by keeping silent - but Jesus says we'll do greater things as He dwells in us via the Holy Spirit. He's our tall battle worn guide leading us on the journey, will we be troubled or encouraged - because Jesus says, I'll dwell with you, I'll embody Myself in the Church, do not be troubled, but follow.

### **Application:**

1. Sit down, get quiet in the morning & let the Spirit lead you through a passage in the Scripture. Use a journal, be prayerful, let God the Spirit speak to you about what the Word of God says to you. Use the tool of Observation, Interpretation, and Application.

2. Sit down at night and do an Examen of your day...Ask the Spirit to reveal where He worked during your day. Ask Him to identify moments where He worked, where you responded well, or where you could respond better in the future. Repent of you sin before Him, and express your gratitude for His constant care.

### **Questions for Study**

1. Icebreaker:
2. Pray and check-in
3. Pastor Jason talked about Jesus' 2 encouragements for His disciples in John 14. What are the 2 encouragements?
4. Based on those, how may the Holy Spirit personally encourage you *right now*?
5. Pray for each other.