



SCRIPTURE + SHARED

Week 2 – John 14

Day 1 – John 14:1-7

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Understanding the Passage:

If you’re wondering what makes John unique among the four gospels or what differentiates his beliefs about Jesus from the rest of the New Testament authors, look no further than here. For John, Jesus *is* God in the flesh. Jesus is the full manifestation of the God of the universe and there can be no equal or comparison.

“No one can come to the Father except through me.” This, the last half of verse 6, has been misinterpreted by Christians who with good intentions want to champion the cause of Christ over other religions or defend Christianity against opponents who say we’re “just another religion” doing harm in the world. It’s important that we understand John’s immediate context if we’re to interpret this verse faithfully.

John’s church had been kicked out of the synagogue because they believed Jesus to be God. John feels he must make the basic theological premise of Christianity, that Jesus is God in the flesh, as clear as possible because the pressure on his church to forsake or negotiate their beliefs had never been stronger. Life would be so much easier for them if they would say Jesus was just a prophet. They could go back to the synagogue, to their home community of faith, and be reunited with friends and family. But John states clearly what their one non-negotiable is: Jesus is the full incarnation of God. One of the themes of church history is that as the percentage of Christians in a culture goes down, the clarity of our beliefs goes up because there is too much at stake to be confused about what we believe.

The Gospel of John is an insider’s conversation. He’s writing to and for Christians; non-Christians are not his audience. This is important because John’s intention is important. His intention is to comfort and build confidence in his congregation because they feel pressured to give up their belief in Christ’s

divinity. His intention is not to argue on Christ's behalf with non-Christians. He's not trying to make a case for Christ. He's trying to build up his church's commitment to Christ. In other words, John is being a good pastor, speaking words of life into his community and reminding them who they are.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. When have you heard John 14:6 used well or misused in church?
2. Think of a time when your faith was under trial. How was your faith simplified but in a good way?
3. What words of comfort does this passage speak to you today?

Day 2 – John 14:8-14

⁸Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do 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; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Understanding the Passage:

Let's be honest - we wouldn't get Jesus either. Jesus just told the disciples that he was the way to the Father, and he's been telling them over and over again *for three years* that he and the Father are one. Yet still the disciples don't understand. They thought Jesus was supposed to summon God from heaven and lead the heavenly armies in the overthrow of the Roman government in Jerusalem. Of all of the disciples, only Philip is brave enough to say aloud what they're all whispering in their hearts: "Jesus, it's been three years and you still haven't shown us God. We thought you'd have brought God down from heaven by now. What's going on?" They just don't get it.

But Philip teaches us that Jesus rewards doubt expressed with sincerity and courage. Jesus doesn't scold Philip. Jesus teaches him. The God they were expecting to come down from heaven has already arrived and is sitting at the table with them, spelling out his last will and testament. Jesus is in God, and God is in Jesus.

Jesus repeats the word "believe" three times in verses 10 and 11. The word could also mean trust. What you think about Jesus all comes down to trust. Do you trust that Jesus is who he says he is? Perhaps it's intentional that Jesus doesn't allow the disciples to reply to his challenge to trust him. They're simply not ready yet. But when they see Jesus risen from the dead, they will be.

A note on verses 13 and 14. Taken at face value, Jesus appears to be saying that he will answer any and every prayer you ask in his name exactly as you prayed it. But anyone who has ever prayed anything knows that can't be true. We have to take this verse in context. In verse 12, Jesus says that anyone who believes in him will do "greater works" than he has done because he is going to the Father, and Jesus and the Father are one. So, in verse 13, he's saying, "If you pray for strength and guidance to achieve one of these greater works, a ministry of love in the world as I have loved, then yes, I will answer that prayer and fulfill it." Jesus isn't saying, "Ask me for anything and it's yours." Rather, he is saying, "Ask me to help you continue my ministry of love in the world, and it's yours."

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Who do you believe Jesus is? What does he mean for your life?
2. When has God rewarded your doubts about faith with an even stronger faith?
3. When has prayer been hard?
4. When has prayer been the only thing holding you together?

Day 3 – John 14:15-17

¹⁵"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

Understanding the Passage:

Here is the first time the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the book of John. In chapter 1, John the Baptist told his crowds in the wilderness that one was coming who would baptize with the Spirit, but the word for spirit there is "pneuma," which literally translates as spirit. In chapter 14, though, John the evangelist uses a different word, *parakletos*. It is *parakletos* that refers to the third person of the Trinity.

Parakletos is a hard word to translate – that's why the many English translations don't agree. Some translations say Counselor, others Comforter, others Advocate, to name only three, and those are wrong. The Paraclete is all of those. The word literally means, "one who calls from close beside." The Holy Spirit is the presence of God so close to you that God can call upon you and you can call upon God.

A few other points about the Parakletos, or Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is like the conduit that connects human beings with God. That's why Jesus says the Parakletos will "be with you forever." The Spirit is the mechanism by which God can be with us always, like this invisible mist that you can't prove is there, but you feel is there.
2. Jesus is clear that the world, or those outside the church, will have a hard time understanding the Spirit. It's because of belief, which Jesus has repeated over and over again in John 14. Though the Spirit is everywhere and real, it takes belief to admit that the Spirit is everywhere and real, and the world struggles with matters of belief. If the world won't believe in Jesus, then the world will have a hard time believing in the Spirit.
3. Jesus says that the disciples already know the Spirit. Apparently, John is not telling his congregation anything new. They have already experienced the presence of the Spirit in their midst. They have felt the Spirit as a real force of God in their lives. John is confirming what the people already know: Jesus is God in the flesh, and the Spirit is God in the air.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. When have you felt the presence of the Spirit in your life?
2. Why do you think people struggle with the idea of a God who is present with us?
3. What new thing do you think the Spirit is calling you to do today?

Day 4 – John 14:18-24

¹⁸"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

Understanding the Passage:

What Jesus is doing here is nothing less than defining what the church is. The church of Jesus Christ is people loving Jesus and keeping his commandments (14:21).

How often do we make church more complicated, harmful, and boring than it has to be? If Jesus were to walk into our churches today (as he is surely doing through the least and the lost), would he see a gathering of human beings in love with him and by virtue of that love, committed to obeying Jesus no matter the cost? Or would he see a collection of people being lonely together, not so much in love with Jesus but with the idea of Jesus, showing up to an expensive event that provides all the entertainment but none of the challenge to follow a crucified Lord?

Jesus had a vision of church so simple that it's only human nature that we would mess it up. Throughout church history the church has been defined as wherever the sacraments are administered and the Word is preached, or wherever there exists a community of the baptized, or wherever there is a handful of people who can agree on the Apostle's Creed, or wherever people follow the same doctrine...the list goes on. While none of those preconditions for church are wrong, neither are they necessary. To Jesus as remembered by John, the church is a beautifully simple idea: whoever is loving Jesus and keeping his commandments to love God and neighbor, there is the church.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. When have you experienced the church to be too complicated, harmful, or boring?
2. Think of two or three experiences that redeemed church for you. What restored your confidence in God's ability to work through the church?
3. How can you be a more faithful member of the body of Christ today?

Day 5 – John 14:25-31

²⁵"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

²⁸You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. ³⁰I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; ³¹but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

Understanding the Passage:

Have you ever drafted a will? It's an eerie feeling when you do it for the first time. You're admitting your mortality and putting that truth in a legal document that will be read after you expire. You're also picking and choosing which persons you actually like. But more important, you're forced to consider what you treasure the most. What is it that you hold most precious, so precious that you are invoking the law to make sure your loved ones possess it after you die? And what is it that you need, not want, *need* your loved ones to have and understand on your behalf? The need is so dire you are willing to speak from beyond the grave.

If you have ever felt or can feel those feelings, you know how Jesus is feeling. His time with the disciples is almost up. He will go to the cross tomorrow. He will expire. And this, these verses above, are part of the will he is leaving in the disciples' possession. What he says here are the teachings he *needs* the disciples to have before he goes. They won't understand these teachings yet, but at least they have them. He is saying them before the clock runs out.

Just a few of the teachings from this passage are:

1. We *will* have the Spirit. Life will be challenging for the disciples after Jesus dies. The world will hate them. The world hates John's church. But Jesus put in his will that we have the Spirit, who is the presence of God with us. When we are afraid and feel hated and rejected, let us not forget the Spirit.
2. We *will* have peace. Jesus doesn't have any money to bequeath his friends, but what he does have he gives freely. He has peace. He has the peace that comes with knowing that the Father loves him beyond measure or comprehension or condition. We have that peace, too. We have the peace of Jesus.
3. We *will* have courage. The disciples are not be afraid because Jesus is going to the Father and then he's coming back. Death is not the end for him. Death is a pause. Death isn't a period; it's a comma. Jesus can face his death with courage because he knows death is not the end of his story. We have that courage, too. We have the courage of Christ that comes with knowing death is never the end of the story; it's simply the end of the beginning.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. When have you experienced the peace of Christ?
2. When have you been empowered with Christ's courage?
3. What do you need your loved ones to hear from you before your time is up?

Video Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of "one house but many dwelling places?"
2. One pastor notes that this text is often used in memorial services, but Dr. Clark-Soles says that wasn't the original intention. So, what was the intention?
3. What do you think Jesus means when he says the disciples will do "greater things" than him?
4. Why does it matter that Jesus wants to make his home with us in this life and not just in heaven?