

## JOHN 16:

Stonebrook Sunday AM, 10/14/18, Matt Heerema

The promise of the Christian life is abundant joy, a deep-rooted, unshakeable understanding of identity and purpose, peace with God, peace with our fellow Christians, power from the Holy Spirit for life and ministry, and persecution, ridicule, exclusion from circles of influence, and possibly even death at the hands of those who will not acknowledge the lordship of Jesus over all things.

That's a pretty cheery intro, isn't it? It's a pretty far cry from most of the really popular Christian self-help books out there. A pretty far cry from the popular television preachers, whose beautiful faces and shining teeth adorn their best selling books.

But it is exactly the life Jesus promised: Deep-rooted joy, an unshakable sense of identity and purpose, peace with God, peace with our family in the church, power from the Holy Spirit, and persecution and death from the world.

Life in Jesus's name is an exceedingly abundant and fruitful life, but in entirely different categories than the things the world values, and the things that our flesh would find comfortable.

### **Review: Upper room discourse so far, summarized.**

Today we are wrapping up John 13-16, what is known as "The upper room discourse", where Jesus lays out his final teaching for his disciples, his final marching orders before heading to the cross the next evening.

I think Jesus's teaching in these four chapters can be summarized this way:

- I am going away.
- Imitate me: love one another.
- You will have trouble,
- but have courage, because
- you will be with me soon.
- Ask for whatever you need.
- The Helper is coming.

These are threads that are repeated throughout the 4 chapters of the upper room discourse. There might be other ways of slicing them, but I think this is a good summary.

Today we are going to focus on the "...but have courage because..." part. That's what I want to encourage you with today. "Take heart." "Be courages." "Be confident in Jesus." "Do not fear."

Let's read today's chapter to find out why we ought to take heart. **READ: John 16**

## **TROUBLE, PERSECUTION, AND DEATH ARE COMING.**

- "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away."
- John writes to the first century church, who are under immense pressure from persecution and hostility from the Jews and the Roman Empire, and recounts Jesus's promises and warnings to comfort them.
- As hard as persecution is, there is a comfort In knowing that God not only is aware of it, he was aware of it beforehand, and all Jesus's actions were based on a plan that accounted for it.
- He shows that their greatest threat is not death, but apostasy
- What is going to happen to them (persecution) ought not take them by surprise, and is not outside Jesus's knowledge or control.
- But they are to take heart for what I see as three big reasons: God knows what is coming, and is in control of it, they are going to get to be with Jesus again soon, God is going to give them everything they need in the meantime.

## **BUT TAKE HEART. JESUS KNOWS, AND IS IN CONTROL.**

*v.4: "But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you."*

- You say "now we get it!" But are you sure?
- To the first-century church: God saw their struggle coming.
- To us today: Take heart: God sees you, knows you, knew this was coming, and is in control.

## **TAKE HEART: YOU WILL HAVE ALL THE HELP YOU NEED!**

God promises that we will have all that we need while we are waiting through this trial and persecution, and he promises to provide it in two ways: The Holy Spirit, and Prayer. And if I'm honest, I struggle with Jesus's words here a bit.

## The Holy Spirit

*v.7 "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."*

- It is better that The Spirit is present than if Jesus were here! REALLY??
- He does the work of evangelism: convicting the world of sin, righteousness, judgement. If it were up to us to do this convincing ourselves, we'd be in a hopelessly lost situation, wouldn't we? But we have The Helper, who does this work for us. We just get to open our mouths. He does the convincing.
- He guides us in truth. I wonder if the apostles at this point were feeling like "oh no, we should have been taking better notes for the last three years!"

## Prayer

*v.24 "Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. "*

- Whatever we ask for in Jesus's name, it will be given!? REALLY?!
- As we go forward on Jesus' mission, seeking to do the works that he did, and even greater; seeking to love one another as he loved; and seeking to tell the world about sin and judgement and Jesus, and as we experience the opposition and persecution that will inevitably result, we will sometimes find ourselves at the end of ourselves, yes? This is when we ask for what we need. In Jesus name. We are supplied with everything we need to persevere on mission in loving one another and proclaiming the news to the lost.
- But we all have unanswered prayer requests don't we? So how is Jesus's promise true?
- **Illustration:** parent withholding a request because they know it is not going to be good for them.
- **James 4:** "You have not because you ask not, you ask and do not receive because you ask with selfish intent, to spend it on your passion."
- Don't seek prayer for your passions (sufferings!), seek prayer for the mission. Better: make the mission your passion. You'll see more prayer answered.
- We are promised that we will be given "every good gift", that the father knows we need as we seek to follow him in doing the work he sent us to do. We are not promised good grades on tests, we are not promised good health and material prosperity.

- We ARE promised everything we need, and in fact an abundance of everything we need, to do the work Jesus has for us to do on this earth in making his name known and loving one another, and showing the world how great he is. The fruit of the spirit. Sustenance through trial. Joy and contentment in sickness and pain. Peace that surpasses all understanding.
- He promises everything we need and abundantly more than we can ask or imagine as we are under duress in keeping our faith and obedience to him in a world that hated Jesus and so hates us.
- **Take heart: you will have everything you need.**

## TAKE HEART: JESUS IS COMING BACK

*v.22 "So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."*

- John writes to the first century church, and to the church today, those going through hardship, missing their savior, crying out the ancient prayer: "Maranatha" - "come Lord!" - and he records Jesus's words, recognizing and empathizing with their sadness that he was leaving.
- He promises them that their sorrow will turn to joy when they are with him again!
- Either through death and thus joining him in paradise, or through his return to set up the new kingdom, we will be with Jesus soon. This is our greatest hope! Our greatest source of courage!
- He uses the analogy of childbirth. The apprehension, the fear, the pain, sometimes actual physical trauma to the mother's body, but the joy that follows when a newborn baby comes into the world!
- Jesus promises that kind of joy, that kind of reward. When we see him again, we will be filled with an inextinguishable joy!

**Brothers and sisters take heart, have great courage.** As we live life following Jesus, we are going to face trouble, persecution, and perhaps even the threat of death for our faith. But we will have everything we need: God knows and is in control, he provides everything we need for the mission through The Holy Spirit and through answered prayer, take heart: we will be with Jesus again soon.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Three major truths summarize Jesus's comforting words of encouragement in John 16:

As you go about a life of mission: loving one another and proclaiming Jesus, you will face trials of many kinds. But take heart because:

- Those trials are not taking God by surprise and are accounted for in his plan.
- We will be with Jesus again soon.
- We will have everything we need to accomplish our mission in the meantime.

1. How is it comforting to know that our trials do not take God by surprise, and that he has planned for them?
2. How is the fact that we will be with Jesus again soon (either through our death, or his return, whichever comes first) a comfort to us even in our hardest struggles?
3. What things other than these promises do we tend to look to for comfort in our trials?
4. Jesus promises that whatever we ask for in his name, we will be given. Do you find it hard to believe this promise? If so, why? Why does it seem like sometimes these prayers are not answered?