



good shepherd
presbyterian church

Comfort

John 14

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Today we are beginning a six week journey to the cross and to Easter Resurrection. Each week we will look at a different chapter of the Gospel of John, starting today with John 14 and progressing through to the John 20 account of Resurrection on Easter morning. All these events take place during the last 12 hours before the Crucifixion, so in effect we are stretching out “Holy Week” and walking through it slowly with Jesus and the disciples.

Today we are looking at the theme of comfort. Jesus has just had the Last Supper and washed the feet of his disciples. He has given them the “love command” and now is talking about going away. The disciples are getting understandably worried about him and what is about to happen. And so in this chapter he encourages them and offers them the extraordinary comfort of the Holy Spirit.

He has told them that he is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” and that “no one comes to the Father but through me.” He has announced that the reason for leaving is that he may return to be with the Father. And so the questions pour out, “What about us? Who will lead us? Who will teach us? How will we get to the Father?” Their professional lives as fishermen, tax collector, and otherwise were shot. They were now inextricably linked to this revolutionary teacher. And now he was leaving. I certainly would have thought, “I feel helpless and alone, and I just don’t know what to do!”

Those questions are why this chapter is often used in funeral services to offer comfort and hope to the family and friends of someone who has died. For the same reason and the same questions it’s also a timely theme for us now, still in the midst of COVID, still in the midst of a world turned upside down, still wondering what is coming next and whether we’ll be okay. Jesus didn’t just

offer this comfort to the disciples, but to all who believe in and follow him. This is a good word and one I am eager to share with you today.

HELP – you have help in Christ

“I feel so helpless.”

Have you ever uttered or thought those words?? I have! Things spin out of control; things are bigger than me; things are beyond my strength or power. We spend a lot of energy wrapping ourselves in security, strength, power, and safety. That makes it all the more terrifying when all that is shattered and we have to whisper out a desperate “Help.”

The disciple Peter has said, “Why can’t I come with you?” Thomas has said, “How will we find you?” Philip has said, “How can we find the Father?” Who will help them? Or we face loss of income, loss of health, problems and breaks in relationship, injustice, discouragement, depression. It is so easy to feel helpless.

And Jesus answers...

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper that He may be with you forever. (v.16)

A Helper sent from God the Father... that sounds good! Tell us more...

That Helper 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 (lives) with you and will be IN you. (v.17)

Here’s the promise of help! God the Father sends the Holy Spirit of truth as Help! And wrapped up in that promise are three very comforting statements in verse 17:

1. “You know Him” – If you have trusted in Jesus Christ, the Father has sent this same Holy Spirit to you as Help. If you know Jesus Christ, then Jesus says you know the Spirit. That is simply part of the eternal truth that God is One in Three! Jesus, the Son, shows us the Father, who sends His Spirit to us. If you trust in Christ, you know the Spirit!

2. “He abides with you” – If you are a Christian, you not only know the Holy Spirit, you have the Spirit. More than that, He abides with you... God lives with you! That’s what ‘abide’ means – God stays and remains and makes a home with you. You have the Spirit. You have help!
3. “And He will be in you” – Even closer than living WITH you, the Holy Spirit lives IN you. God’s Spirit lives in your life, in your heart, in your soul. Your spirit is never alone, for God’s Spirit is always with and in you!

Jesus promises his friends and he promises us – you have help! And his assurance of God’s Holy Spirit anticipates what he says next, that you are not alone!

HOME – you are not alone

Having made these promises about the Help God would send, Jesus reassures his disciples (and us!) in a number of ways. The gist of these statements is that we are not alone. He’s already said that in promising us that the Holy Spirit would live with us and in us, but he becomes even more explicit and talks about himself being with us again. Listen to five wonderful statements from Jesus:

1. “I will not leave you as orphans” (v.18) – This is the heart of our fear of being alone... that we be “orphaned” in the world. This is Jesus echoing God’s promise of old to “never leave you nor forsake you.” One of the enduring characteristics of God is that He is with us. God is neither distant nor detached; rather, God is our Heavenly Father and will never abandon us or leave us without help. Even as God sends the Holy Spirit as help, Jesus promises that we will never be truly alone.
2. “I will come to you” (v.18) – Jesus has told them he was going away, but now he promises that he will return. This probably refers to his resurrection (and indicates Jesus understands that he will die and be raised), but it also has a fuller layer of meaning that describes our reunion with him at judgment. For us, Jesus comes to us in terms of salvation when we trust in him; and, he will come to us as Savior and Lord when we stand before him in Heaven. We will not face judgment alone – he will stand with us and in place of us!

3. “You will see me” (v.19) – Jesus promised the disciples that they would see him again. There is an intentional layered meaning again... that the disciples would get to see Jesus again after the resurrection and then in God’s Kingdom. We will also get to behold Jesus one day, face to face.
4. “You will live also” (v.19) – Because Jesus is raised from the dead, we shall be raised to life. The focus begins to clearly move toward eternity. By faith, we will share in the resurrection and live with God forever. Back up to the first statement, and this becomes an amazing promise. We will not be orphaned; rather, Jesus has secured us a home forever with God!
5. “You will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (v.20) – This is the great mystery and the great hope! It is already a present reality, though we struggle to understand and experience it. Because of Jesus’ work, the Father’s loving will, and the union with God that comes about by the Holy Spirit living in us, we are intimately and eternally united with God’s family and home through Jesus Christ. We are adopted into the family and we have a room waiting for us! I could preach the whole sermon on this one phrase! That is what salvation is – what Christ has accomplished! Jesus has brought us home to the Father. We struggle even now to understand our new identity as beloved and chosen children... we look forward to knowing fully in that day what it means to have our life and home with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

WHAT TO DO – loving and obeying are intimately connected

Having begun to answer our cries of “I feel alone and helpless,” Jesus also answers the cry of “I just don’t know what to do!” He makes it seem a natural progression, though we probably would not have put this series of thoughts together.

What we are to do is keep God’s commandments! We are to obey God’s Word!

What does that have to do with personal peace?? Jesus says that loving and obeying God are intimately connected.

Listen to what he says in verse 21:

The one who loves me is the one who...

1. *HAS my commandments*
2. *KEEPS my commandments*

And this is not the first time Jesus has said this! He has already said similar things several times in the prolonged conversation with the disciples and their various questions in John 13-14. How do we express our love for God, our Heavenly Father? How do we respond to the one who sends us help and who assures that we are never alone? It is by hearing, reading, receiving, and accepting God's Word and commandments. And it is by keeping them – obeying, following, and submitting to them. Jesus goes on to talk about God's love for us:

And the one who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will disclose myself to him. (v.21)

How do we know and experience the giving of the Helper and the gift of a home with God? Those things are expressions of God's love for us! Jesus says that we know and experience God's love through obedience to God.

It's an invitation: Do you trust God through Jesus Christ? Will you receive God's Word and follow it? God loves you! And as you trust and obey God through His Word, you will be able to know and experience the love that gives you both help and home. You are not helpless! You are not alone! And Jesus has told you what to do – obey and serve God through His Word!

MORE HELP – you have just the help you need

Jesus had said that we love God through having and keeping God's Word. Realistically, we struggle so hard to do that! Surely even in obeying God we are desperate for God's help. Jesus reminds us again of the help that he has sent:

[Remember again] 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. (v.26)

As Christians, you already have within you the very help that you need to receive and obey God's Word. Where your faith is weak, God will give you strength. Where you doubt and disobey, God will remind you and convict you of your need for Him. That's another role of the Holy Spirit! That's part of the "help" He gives you. The Spirit helps you to receive His help! How in the world can you access that help? Pray! Listen! If you are a Christian, this Holy Spirit IS in you! This Holy Spirit does speak to your spirit. This Holy Spirit will help you hear God and obey God. And this Holy Spirit will help you remember who you are in Christ and the TRUTH that you are not alone, and not helpless – you have help and you have a home in God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, and in the power of this same Holy Spirit of Truth.

Personal Peace

Have we gone afield of the topic of personal peace? I don't think so. At least not in terms of that common cry of "I feel alone and helpless and I just don't know what to do!" Jesus has spoken pretty specifically to each of those cries, and has promised us help and a home and a path forward. And so, it seems natural to me that he then turns to direct words of comfort and peace.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (v.27)

Jesus understood the call to obedience and the promises of help and home to offer personal peace. And he reminds us that it is not a worldly peace... it's not the limited or false security of an alarm system, a healthy body, financial power, great education, or any of the other ways we seek personal peace. Our peace is in God the Father, who has given us both help and home, and who speaks to us words of love that we are to hear and obey.

Do you need and want peace? Jesus promises it to us and tells us that we can know it and experience it through hearing and following God's Word. That Word promises us help and a home!

May God give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to follow His Word.
Amen.