

“A Glorious Farewell” John 14:1-14 Shane Hatfield 2/7/21

Thank you so much for joining us tonight. My name is Shane Hatfield and I'm the senior pastor here, and I'm back! We were out for a couple weeks with the coronavirus and while we were out, somebody said, “Oh, you're having your corona vacation!” And I said, “I don't know what you call a vacation, but this is not how I describe a vacation! This is not what I would want to do on my vacation.” No, it was lots of sitting and resting and trying to heal and be well, and so now, we've healed and we're past the 14-day barrier, no symptoms, we're good! And we're excited to be here to worship with you all. We're excited to be with you. For those who are online, I wish we could see you in person. I now know as much as everybody that while the grace of technology is good that allows us to kind of be together, it's not the same as being here in person. God has given us embodied souls, and so we worship Him with our body and our soul together, and we connect with each other, with our bodies and our souls together. So, we long for the day when you can come and be with us and we can all be together, body and soul. So, hopefully that will come soon. We're gradually phasing back the kid's programs like Daniel said, we're gradually trying to bring back fellowship events, we're going to try to do some things online, and hopefully, if weather will permit, we'll try to do some things outside so we can be together again. But we're hopeful that things will change in the future, but until then, thanks for your patience and your encouragement and your forbearance with us as we try to love each other well during the pandemic. So, hopefully, Lord willing, we'll be together again soon.

The one thing that we can continue to do is study God's word together, and that's what we're going to do tonight. We're looking at John 14, so if you've got a Bible you can turn there. We've been looking at Jesus' glorious farewell that He gave His disciples before He left. We're going to continue that tonight. So, this is what happened. When Jesus reminded His disciples that He was going to leave, of course they were troubled, and they were afraid. And so, Jesus said, ‘Listen, trust me. Don't be afraid. I'm going away, but it is going to bring you blessings. It is going to bring you gifts because I leave.’ And the first one that He said was that His departure would secure and prepare an eternal home for them. That's what we looked at the first week. Then, the second week, we looked at that His departure showed them the way to the Father. And in both those weeks we talked about how those truths can calm and quiet our souls when we are troubled and we're afraid.

Well, this week, we're going to look at the third blessing of Jesus' departure, or the third gift of His departure, and that is the gift of purpose. Because Jesus goes to the Father, we have a glorious purpose that we get to live out during our time on earth. So, we're going to read John 14:1-14 so we get the whole context, and then we'll focus in on verses 12-14. So, this is God's word right here.

“¹“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In 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? ³And 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. ⁴And you know the way to 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 had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹ 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’? ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. ¹² “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. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

This is the word of the Lord. Let’s give our full attention to it.

Dr. Robert Rayburn was the president of covenant seminary for a long time. But before that, he was a chaplain, and he was a chaplain during the Korean War. And during his time there, he wrote a book called “Fight the Good Fight” where he describes his time as a chaplain during the war. In that book, he tells a story about his first flight into combat, and this is what happened. He was assigned to an airborne unit and he showed up on base and he found out that his first day there they were going to do a night combat jump. So, he spent the entire day learning how to parachute drop out of an airplane. He didn’t even have his jump wings yet. So, he spends the whole day learning how to parachute out of the airplane, he gets in with the crew, they are flying to the drop zone, and of course he’s scared and he’s afraid and he’s been awake all day trying to learn how to jump. Well, during the flight, he begins to pray that he would be able to impart peace to the soldiers. And as he begins to pray, his eyes become heavy and his head slumps and he falls asleep in the plane. The next thing he knows, one of the soldiers is shaking him and saying, ‘Hey chaplain, we’re going to jump.’ They jump out of the plane. He lands safely, but he’s incredibly embarrassed that he’s fallen asleep at such a dangerous time. Well, amongst the soldiers word got out about this chaplain that fell asleep on the flight over, and as the days passed and the soldiers heard about this chaplain, many of them came to him and said, ‘I want to know the God that can help you have so much peace that you could fall sleep on the way to combat.’ And he was able to share the gospel with these soldiers because he had fallen asleep on the flight.

Now, I tell you that story because it’s a great illustration of how as we rest in the gospel and we experience the peace of the gospel, we get to express that peace to others. We get to share it with others. Tonight, as we look at John 14:12-14, what I want us to see is that we have a glorious purpose and that glorious purpose is that we get to experience the peace of Christ and we get to express that peace to others. For all who believe in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, they have peace with God and now they have the opportunity to share that peace with other people so they can experience it through the proclamation of the gospel or through deeds of compassion. So, we’re going to talk about this glorious purpose tonight and I think it’s really important for us because, now more than ever, when everything is topsy turvy and things have been chaotic, we need to know that we have purpose to our days.

Whenever the pandemic started back in the spring, well I guess it was in the summertime, every year for RUF, that’s the job that I worked before I came to Ethos, they do training and they bring in people to prepare us to minister to the students and one of the people that they brought in was Dr. Henry Cloud who is a famous psychologist. He’s written a book called “Boundaries” and a lot of other spin-off books called “Boundaries,” but they brought him in to be able to prepare us to minister to students during the pandemic. And he said one of the things that we

have to do to help the students is to help them see their purpose, because as humans we're not created to not have a purpose, to just sit around on our hands and wait and do nothing. So, he said, you have to help them see that even right now, they have a purpose. And I think that that's not just for students, but I think all of us. We need to know that we have a purpose to our days. We need to know the meaning and purpose that we have, and especially when things are topsy turvy, it's a great time to focus in on that purpose, okay? So, I'm hoping that as we meditate on this passage, that we will more and more see the purpose that God has for us in our lives.

So, we're going to look at three things tonight from this passage. First, we're going to look at the order of our purpose, then we're going to look at the nature of our purpose, and lastly, we'll look at the power of our purpose. The order, the nature and the power. The first thing we see is the order of our purpose. If you look at verse 12, notice what Jesus says, He says, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do." Now I want you to notice the order of Jesus' words. Jesus puts the believing before the doing. He puts believing before the doing. Now this is important because this is a theme that we see all throughout Scripture. Christianity always puts the believing before the doing. Think back to the Old Testament and the ten commandments. What comes before the ten commandments? It's the preamble. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." What's God saying? He's saying, I want you to believe the truth that I have saved you before you obey the truth that I've given you in the law. Believing comes before the doing.

If you look at the book of Romans, what do you see? Paul spends eleven chapters explaining the truths of the gospel, and then he gets to chapter 12 and he says, "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship." Paul puts the believing before the doing. If you look at the Westminster shorter catechism, okay, the Westminster Confession of Faith is our theological standards, the shorter catechism is a question and answer version of that. Question and answer three says, "What does the Bible primarily teach?" And the answer is "The Bible primarily teaches what man must believe about God and what God requires of man." The believing comes before the doing. And why is that so important? It's so important because when we start to talk about purpose, if we put the doing in front of the believing, then we end up living by works. But, if we keep the believing first, if we believe the truth about what God has done in the gospel, then that helps us do what God has commanded us to do based on grace and not based on our performance. So when Jesus says, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do," He's saying, I want you to believe the gospel first, believe the truth about my life, death and resurrection, first, then go out and fulfill your purpose to work.

So, let me ask you this, what is your purpose? Let me ask you in a more practical way. What gets you out of bed in the morning? What is it? Is it money, is it the desire to earn approval, is it the taste of success, is it a crying baby, the bathroom, the dog? We've all got a reason why we get out of bed. What is it? I thought about this over the last week or so because as I was sick I was lying in bed, and as I was lying in bed I wanted to get out of bed, but I couldn't get out of bed because I was tired, and I couldn't go do the things that I would normally do, like pastor or educate my kids or serve around the house, and so I wanted to do all these things but I couldn't do them because I didn't feel well. So, I just laid in bed and I thought, "Why do I normally get out of bed?" And it dawned on me. So often I get out of bed because deep in my heart, I want to earn love and acceptance and when I do that, I'm not living based on the gospel, I'm living based on my own works. And in that moment, the thing that I could do to believe the

gospel was to lay there and be sick and get well so I could take care of my family in the future. So, let me ask you, what gets you out of bed? For the believer, ideally, the thing that gets us out of bed is the gospel truth that God loves us, and He has saved us, and we are His and we have His love and acceptance. We have peace with Him, and it's because we have peace with Him then we get up and we do our work. We serve our families, take out the dog, all those things that we do in the morning. Now, if your baby's crying, you should get up immediately and go take care of your baby, but as you're going you think about the gospel first, right? So, the first thing we've got to do is we've got to put the believing before the doing.

Now, if you're here tonight and you don't know what your purpose is, maybe you're genuinely seeking, you're questioning, you're wondering, what is my purpose? Let me tell you that Christianity gives you a purpose based on the person and work of Jesus and not based on your own performance. I talked to dozens and dozens of college students who had come to college, who would wake up halfway through their first semester and go, 'What is my purpose in life? I don't even know why I'm here!' And we'd sit down, and we'd talk about the truth of the gospel. We'd show them the purpose they could have in the gospel. If that's you here tonight, I want to encourage you to believe in the gospel, to trust in Jesus Christ and let that give you your purpose.

So, the first thing we see is the order of our purpose, the believing comes before the doing. Well, what is our purpose? That's the second thing we want to talk about. The nature of our purpose. So, Jesus says that all who believe in Him will do the works that He did. What works did He do? Now, I know it's been a few weeks but I want you to think back to last time we studied John and we talked about what Jesus showed us about the Father, and I said what Jesus was doing is He was showing how the Father was bringing shalom on earth. What is shalom? Shalom is peace. Shalom as a concept means that God is bringing wholeness or rightness to the earth, that the world is sinful and broken but God wants to heal it and He wants to make it right and righteousness. And so, Jesus came to bring shalom. He came to bring peace to all things and His miracles, and His teachings brought God's shalom, brought heaven to earth. When He is feeding the 5,000, He is giving them the spiritual nourishment that they need. When He is healing the sick, He is giving the physical wholeness and healing that they need.

So based on what Jesus is saying, those who believe in Him and have faith in Him, will do the works that he did, meaning, that we will in some way bring shalom on earth, that our purpose is to bring peace. Now, if that wasn't incredible enough, Jesus goes on to say, we'll do even greater works than He did! Now that statement seems a little ridiculous if you think about what Jesus did, right? In John alone, John shows us Jesus feeding thousands of people with a few fish and a few loaves of bread, Jesus healing people dramatically, completely, Jesus walking on water, and Jesus even raising the dead. So, how in the world could we do the works that He did and do even greater works? Is He saying that we're all going to have the gift of miracles and healings? No. I don't think that's what He's saying, and most theologians don't think He is either. What I think Jesus is saying that our work will be qualitatively like His, our work will be qualitatively similar to His, but quantitatively greater.

Now, what do I mean by that? I've already alluded to it in the beginning, but I think our work is qualitatively like Jesus', because when we work in His name, we can bring some measure of peace and wholeness to this world, right? When we preach and teach the gospel, we may not be the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity incarnate, but through the power of the Holy Spirit God we can use our words to bring gospel peace to people. We may not be able to feed the multitudes with a few fish and a few loaves of bread, but we can go out and we can

feed the poor in the name of Jesus and we can go out and spiritually feed our children by volunteering with Ethos Kids! We can help the people of the world have the spiritual and physical nourishment that they need. That is like Jesus' work in a qualitative sense! So, in that sense we can do the works that Jesus did, but they might not be as miraculous, they might be more ordinary, right? They might work through God's ordinary providence and not His miraculous powers. So, they're qualitatively similar, but I think they're quantitatively greater.

If you think about it, at this point in Jesus' teaching, He only has eleven followers left. By the time He gets to the cross, He's all by Himself. In the upper room of Pentecost there's 120 people present. So, you could say that Jesus' ministry, in terms of what happened physically when He was on earth, only amounted to about 120 people in the end. But what happens after His ascension? What happens after the Holy Spirit falls at Pentecost? Jesus ascends, later the Holy Spirit falls on the 120 at Pentecost, Peter goes out and preaches the first sermon at Pentecost, what happens? 3,000 people put their faith in Christ. As we go through the book of Acts, we see thousands and thousands of people come to Christ. As we go through church history, there have been millions and millions if not billions, untold numbers of people become Christians since Jesus has ascended! God has used the church, and the Holy Spirit at work through the church, to quantitatively spread the gospel across the face of the earth. And so, in that way, the works that we are do are even greater than Jesus'.

As we believe the gospel, and we proclaim the gospel of peace, and we practice deeds of compassion, we are doing the works that Jesus did and we are a part of His mission to spread the gospel across the face of the earth and to rescue all of His people. That's our purpose. We get to be a part of His mission to bring shalom here on earth through the proclamation of the gospel and through deeds of compassion. Now, if you've been around presbyterian churches you know that the Westminster Confession of Faith tells us that man's primary purpose is what? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. I like the way they say that. But I have another way that I like to say it. It's a little bit simpler. I like to say that our purpose is to experience God and express Him. You can talk about all the different ways in which we can experience God and express Him, so we can experience His grace and express His grace. We can experience His love and express His love. As Madi sang about so beautifully, we can experience His mercy and express His mercy. We can experience His peace and express His peace. That's our purpose. To glorify God and enjoy Him as we experience His peace and we express it to others. That's why we get out of bed in the morning. Isn't that a great purpose? Isn't that a glorious purpose, that we get to be a part of God's cosmic plan of redemption for the whole earth? And we can do that in ordinary, practical, but powerful ways through our lives. It's been funny watching the pandemic, because on the one hand it's been a terrible, terrible time of suffering, and I don't want to minimize that at all, but because of all the online services, there is more gospel being preached in broadcast right now online than at any point in human history. That's a blessing that the peace of the gospel is going out through technology. And we have all of these amazing ways in which we can serve our friends and our families and our neighbors around us on a daily basis. It has given us an opportunity to demonstrate our purpose here on earth, to experience God's peace and express it.

So, that's the nature of our purpose, now, how do we get the power to do that? How do we get the power? It doesn't come from us. It comes from Jesus. Look back at the text, look at verses 13 and 14: ¹³ "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." Jesus is saying that He is the one who is going to supply the power to do works in His name. When we pray in Jesus' name for His will to be done and for His mission to be fulfilled, then He will do it. Now the

Greek in these words is emphatic and Jesus is saying, 'I want you to earnestly beg me, please, pray for everything that you think will accomplish my mission, and I will do it.' Now, there are two ways that people tend to take these verses. One way that people tend to take these verses is they tend to pull them out of context and say that based on these verses, that God will answer any prayer that we make no matter what, even prayers for miracles and healings. One, you can't do theology pulling verses out of context, you always have to do theology in context. What is Jesus doing here? Jesus is preparing His followers to carry out His mission after He leaves, right? So, whatever Jesus says, in this passage, is going to pertain to them carrying out His mission later. So, the prayer has to be for His mission, it has to be for His plan to bring peace on earth, it has to be for God's glory, it has to be according to God's will. And we know that that doesn't mean granting every single prayer that we pray because Jesus, after this, is going to go to the garden of Gethsemane and ask God if there's another way, three times, and every time God says, 'No!' And Paul is going to go to God three times and ask for his thorn to be taken away and every time God's going to say, 'No, I like you better with it.' So, it can't mean that God answers everything indiscriminately that we ask.

But I also don't think it means that we can only ask for things that pertain to the spiritual gospel. Some people want to take the opposite approach and say we can't pray for anything unless it's the spiritual needs of people, and they take any sort of power of the Holy Spirit to heal or to do anything out of the ordinary out of these verses. I don't think that's true either. James tells us "if there's anyone sick among you let the elders of the church come and pray for them that they may be healed." And so, if that's true, we can't even practice James' verses. Scripture always interprets Scripture and we always take the whole of Scripture together and so, instead of this pendulum swing from one end to the other, I think we need to take the narrow road in the middle, and say that God wants us to earnestly, confidently beg Him to answer prayers that we believe will accomplish His mission, that we believe will bring the gospel of peace here on earth and that we pray will bring compassion and healing to people, and trust His sovereign grace and authority to answer it in the way that He sees fit. All of this comes in the context of God as sovereign. God has a plan. He is sovereign. It is good and He is working out His plan through us.

Let me tell you what that looks like in my life. I was born with a heart defect, okay? I have a condition called Tetralogy of Fallot. The doctors performed surgery when I was younger and that basically allowed me to live a fairly normal life. But that physical defect, because of sin, created in my character a defect where my entire life, I tried to overcompensate for this physical defect by hard work and determination, and that made me, even as a Christian, a very self-righteous and difficult person to be around. Well, when I was in my twenties, the church that I went to brought in a faith healer and the faith healer said, if you have any physical defects and you want to be healed, come down front and we'll pray for you. And if you have the faith to be healed, you will be healed. So, what did I do? I went down front and I prayed. And I earnestly tried to believe that truth with all the power that I had, and then I went to my next annual doctor's visit and I was devastated when the results came back that I still had my heart condition.

So, what happened? Did God's word fail? Did my prayers fail? Or did God have something different in mind? Years later, I was reading Romans 5, and there's a verse in Romans 5 where Paul says that the Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts, that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And in that moment it dawned on me that God had answered my prayer to heal my heart, but He didn't do it the way I thought He was going to do it. He had done it by healing me spiritually. He had spiritually filled the hole in my heart with His love. And I thought to myself, 'You know what... if that's how He, in His sovereign

goodness, decided to answer my prayer, then it must be better for me and the kingdom, and I must experience more of His love with a broken heart filled by the Spirit than with a normal heart that's cold and hard and self-reliant.' God answered my prayer but He had something much bigger and something much more important in mind than just my physical healing.

So, I would ask you, where do you want to see peace come on earth? Spiritual peace and physical peace. Bring it to the Lord. Honestly, confidently, humbly pray for His will to be done and trust Him with the answer. Trust His timing, trust His answer, trust His intentions. He is good and He loves you and He is going to accomplish His mission to bring shalom here on earth, and we get to sit back and watch Him do it. So, that's our purpose. God has given us this powerful purpose that we get to experience His peace and express it. Faith in Christ enlists us into His army of peacemakers. It doesn't remove us from the sin and misery of this world, it actually propels us into the sin and misery of this world, armed with the Holy Spirit and the word of God and prayer. And we see conflict, we move towards it, and we ask God to show us how to be peacemakers. And we see hurt, we move towards it, and we ask God to show us how to heal. When we see sin destroying people, we move towards people and we share the gospel of grace with them because we have experienced it ourselves.

Let me share one more story because I think it will encourage y'all. This is a story I heard of how one person is trying to work out this gospel of peace in their lives during the pandemic. This was sent to me by another campus minister, a former student of his is a nurse and she's a nurse in a COVID IC unit in Nashville and she shared this for her congregation, and so, I'm going to share a portion of it with you. They asked her what she wanted them to know about what had been going on in the hospitals and this is what she says. She says, "The darkness is really dark. It's difficult to describe. I've heard the wailings of family members in the hallway as their family members passed away. I have been the one holding their family member's hand while they scream and hit the glass because they can't be in the room. I hold their hand and I touch their face because I believe that nobody deserves to die alone. In all those things, my heart despairs because it wants to believe that this is it, that it's never going to end, and that the darkness has won. But there's something deep inside of me that knows that this isn't the case, knows that outside of how I feel about it, knows outside even of what I think about it or how I experience it, that we have hope. We ultimately have hope because of what we celebrate this time of year, that Christ has come, that what was promised has been, is being and will be fulfilled, and that is our hope on this side of eternity. Eternity is what I think of now when I walk into work. It informs my movements and my actions and how I process what I'm seeing, because there is little hope even in medicine. I think that for the physical world, medicine is helpful. It promises some shalom, some rightness and some part of what our bodies were made for and that is one of the greatest privileges of my job, is being able to bring rightness through physical things and I think I can say more than anyone that the hope that medicine gives us can only take us so far. The hope that Christ can give us is so secure. It is founded on something outside of us and it's more beautiful than anything else in this world that I believe that one day we will feast in the house of Zion and everything that is wrong will be made right." Her faith in the person and work of Jesus allows her to go into the sin and misery of this world and bring shalom and proclaim the gospel of peace and do deeds of compassion.

All who believe in Christ have this incredible purpose. Whether you're sitting at the dinner table just trying to talk to your kids through conflict, there's an opportunity for you to bring peace. Whether you're out in the neighborhood and you learn that one of your neighbors has COVID and you make them a meal, there's an opportunity for you to bring peace. Whether

you're in the medical community and you're walking into hospitals, into homes, where people are sick, you have the opportunity to bring God's peace there. Where you see people who don't know the gospel, and they're being destroyed by sin, you have an opportunity to bring peace. That's our purpose. We get to experience it and to express it. Well, we can't do it by ourselves, it has to come through the Holy Spirit, so next week, Jesus is going to follow this all up with a whole big section about the Holy Spirit, so we're going to talk all about how the Holy Spirit helps us fulfill this purpose. Now, let's go to God and let's ask Him to show us how we can fulfill this great purpose every day, and how we can experience His peace and express it to others through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the name of Jesus. Let's pray.