

The Densest Moment | Jesus Christ's Farewell Conversation

"The Ministry of the Spirit" OR "The Discloser"

John 16.4-15

3.12.23

"But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.⁵ "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'⁶ "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.⁷ "But 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.⁸ "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

¹² "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.¹⁴ "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.¹⁵ "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore, I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

We're looking at a discourse of Jesus Christ, a talk He gave at the end of His ministry, only hours before His arrest and famously known today as *The Upper Room Discourse*. It's found only in John's Gospel... And it's dense. It's super heavy because all the lines of Jesus Christ's acts, thought and teaching connect here. Every word counts.

We've focused on the emotional, spiritual, psychological state of the students. Their Teacher sees their condition. He knows why Judas left the meal. He knows that the remaining young men have seen and heard things over the last three years they can never forget and that, come what may, will mark them forever. They can never be the same.

AND Jesus Christ, knowing the inner state of the disciples, is painfully aware that their hearts are fallen. They're young men with stars in their eyes and as much as they say they're concerned for HIM and for the mission of God – they're main focus is on their prospects for the future. *"Dad begged me not to go with this Man from Nazareth but now we're here in the capital city and, 'turns out I'm getting a really good position in the highest echelons of government! My future looks BRIGHT! Look at me now, Dad!"* What does YOUR future hold?

My wife Missy and I have been thinking about the future lately. Missy's getting older – she'll be sixty next month... But, all joking aside (well, SOME joking aside!) our whole country is concerned about the future of Medicare and Social Security and how many people's futures could be affected by changes there. AND we regularly get people who want prayer for their futures (e.g. to go to college or not; to buy a home; to get married; change jobs or when to retire; to have children or not; how to care for aging parents; whether to move out of this area etc.) AND let's face it: we're all worried about the future.

Here, Jesus Christ, addresses this preoccupation in the young men God gave Him to train and teach AND the fixation WE ALL HAVE: anxiety about the future. In this passage we find:

- 1) **Concern for My Future**
- 2) **Concern of the Spirit**
- 3) **Concern for the Kingdom**

Jesus Christ knows, as they celebrate the Passover on that dark, dark night (13.30) that this ritual/liturgical/symbolic meal that's been celebrated for like 1,500 years in which a lamb is slaughtered in place of the firstborn sons of Israel, now comes to its destination: the symbol has pointed to Him. He IS the Firstborn and He IS the Passover Lamb come to be sacrificed for all God's people in all ages.

He wonders aloud (v. 5) why no one asks where He's going: *"I'm going to Him who sent Me and no one asks Me, 'Where are you going?'"* BUT they have asked that very question... TWICE since the dinner began! CH 13, *"Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are You going?'"* (36) and a few verses later, *"Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we don't know where You are going, how do we know the way?'"* (14.5)

Was Jesus not listening? Well, He was listening to what they said AND to what they didn't say. They weren't REALLY asking where He was going and what He was going to do but WHY He would possibly leave them at this point when to be without Him would ruin everything!

Have you ever had a party or a dinner and someone leaves very early and you're really disappointed and you ask, "What?! Where are you going?!" But you're NOT really asking at all; you're stating "It's bad for you to leave NOW? I DON'T WANT YOU TO GO!"

When they seem to be asking, "Where are you going?" they're actually complaining, *"You brought us to the one-yard line and NOW you're dropping the ball? What could be more important than seeing to it that we're sitting comfortably at the conference table in Your government and our prospects for the future are secured?! C'mon Lord, what could more important? Where Ya' goin?"*

So... where **IS** Jesus going?

He's going to save the world. And the way He'll do that is to keep or fulfill the Covenant made between God and humanity. The world has to be reclaimed by a man since it was lost by a man. Someone must

come forth who obeys God, fully and from the heart... A real flesh-and-blood Man has to live a human life that's in perfect harmony with the will of the Father.

Someone must atone for sin and correct the cosmic imbalance in the books. It requires a human sacrifice. A spotless, pure, loving, flawless, holy life must be offered as a payment to satisfy the demands of justice, the ultimate act of love ... AND the blood of that sacrifice must be offered before the throne of God. AND THAT IS WHERE JESUS IS GOING!

It had been performed symbolically for 1,500 years in the sacrifices of animals "on Jewish alters slain" but those symbols pointed to the reality in Jesus Christ. As it says in the *Book of Hebrews*: "(it was) not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, Jesus Christ entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (If the animals were symbols) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9.12-14)

Where IS Jesus going? To the Father, to save the world:

"And Now For Me He Stands /Before The Father's Throne/ He Shows His Wounded Hands /And Names Me As His Own."

"Yeah, but Lord, what about our jobs in the government? What are we gonna tell our parents?!"

This is why Jesus says (12), "*I have many more things to tell you but you can't handle it now.*" I think we understand this impulse in the hearts of those disciples. We remember being told by the registrar, "There's no way that you can graduate this May... it's gonna take another semester." The sense of disappointment like your whole life is over. Or "We regret to inform you that at this time we must deny your entrance into so-and-so institution..."

I have a friend who just lost a job... he's in his 60s – his future is suddenly in jeopardy. OR "Your child has been diagnosed with _____" and suddenly the future you imagined is threatened or altered beyond repair. Concern for My Future.

Our second point is: the Concern of the Spirit. When Jesus Christ goes to the Father and His sacrifice is accepted, the Covenant is fulfilled, the earth is (as it were) sanctified by His offering and the Spirit is poured out, the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will also animate His Body, the Church.

He will animate or motivate (i.e. put into motion) His desires for the church and the world. The two desires or concerns highlighted here are to convict and to communicate.

The Helper or Spirit of Truth, as He's called, will come into and work alongside and through the disciples and the church to prosecute or prove guilty (convict) the whole system of opposition to God called "the world".

The Spirit's concern is to prosecute on the world-stage that the project to dethrone God and discredit His Beloved Messiah is evil and has failed. *"The One who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord scoffs at them"*. (Ps. 2.4)

The Spirit will work out His concerns through the Apostles and the Church to render judgment concerning the world's sin, righteousness and judgment.

The world's SIN is its unwillingness to believe in Jesus Christ. He came into the world not to judge the world but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3.17) but the world, seeking ALWAYS to be independent of God, would NOT depend on Jesus Christ...would not trust or believe Him. THIS is the world's great sin ("concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me...")

The Spirit will further pronounce the world-system to be guilty and condemned on account of its righteousness. The world gets righteous using comparison ("I don't roll my eyes when my husband talks to me – so I must be more righteous than she is..." – "When my mint plant grows ten inches, I cut off an inch and give it at the temple – and HE doesn't so I'm more righteous than he is...") But NONE of that comparison stuff qualifies a person to be called righteous... it only makes you defensive and anxious.

True RIGHTEOUSNESS enables you to stand faultless before the throne of the "holy, holy, holy" God. Psalm 24 asks: *"Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?"* ANSWER: *"He who has clean hands and a pure heart"* (3-4) And only One has ever qualified. "The Helper will convict the world about righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me..." He will show the world what righteousness really IS – it's access to the Holy God.

Third: *"when the Helper comes, will convict the world concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged"*. The cross of Jesus shows that God, at His weakest is infinitely stronger than the devil at his strongest. The message the Apostles and Church proclaim is that this world, where he who dies with the most toys wins, is an illusion...is death, so jump ship!

The second desire of the Helper, the Spirit of Truth is to convict and second to communicate. *"He will guide you into all truth...He will speak...He will disclose...take of My words and disclose them to YOU"*.

He will enable the Apostles to remember the words of Jesus that were once obscure and mysterious and He will bring these words to their remembrance so they can write them down for the Church (for US!).

He'll give them to see the significance of these words and inspire faith in them so the words of Jesus can be believed. He'll bring out the truth, beauty and goodness of all Jesus said, *"He WILL GLORIFY Me"* in opening your eyes to trust all that I've said.

The Spirit's concern is to point to Jesus Christ who overcame the world and who went to the Father to present Himself an atoning sacrifice for everyone who simply believes. And when we do believe – we're

agreeing with the Spirit that unbelief in Jesus Christ and independence from God is the essence of sin and ends in death and then the second death.

When we believe, the Spirit moves us to see that my comparison-based righteousness falls far short and will NOT gain me access to God – that only comes as a gift, when I believe in Jesus Christ and His perfect goodness is attributed to me (even though I don't deserve it.)

And the Spirit's concern works in me a denial of the world – I see it as DOOMED – and I come to be more and more, daily concerned with the Kingdom of God. I've heard that mighty Voice from the last Book saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God, day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death". (12.10-11)

The Spirit brings to mind the words of the Victor: *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* (Matt. 6.33-34)

The Helper, the Spirit of Truth is using the words of Jesus as He disclosed them to the Apostles to liberate me from this perpetual anxiety about the future...MY future. And instead, He has us focus on God's Kingdom – God's beautiful reign... "Lord, in my life, Thy Kingdom come... Lord, in this Church, Thy Kingdom come, Lord in our city and in South Florida, this nation, this world – Thy Kingdom come."

And when I go that way with the Spirit... fear and obsession and the weight of success and figuring it all out – it melts away and I'm able to enjoy God and enjoy the moment... confident that whatever my future holds, My Father does all things well. And I can rest in that truth.