

I. Introduction

A. If you have been paying close attention, you may have noticed that a few years ago I stopped talking about 10 + 10 – which was shorthand for spending ten minutes a day reading the Bible and ten minutes a day in prayer.

1. I never thought it was ideal – and routinely said, “If you are doing more don’t back up.’ But I did think it would be an upgrade for most people – who were doing less. And I also thought that it would be a pathway to more. That if I could get you into the book for a bit, it would sell itself.

2. CS Lewis has this line about the Bible being like a caged lion, and the best way to defend a caged lion is to open the cage and let the lion defend itself. In a related way, I thought the most likely way for God to grab your heart – and make you want more – was to get you reading His book.

B. And for what it’s worth, it worked for some

1. I remember a conversation with a couple whose son – a young single adult who had just quit his job to move to Africa and help open a hospital. They were torn between being very proud and being a bit unsettled over the move. And as we talked about this, the Dad said, “You know this is your fault. You told him to read the Bible for ten minutes a day and pray for ten and he says that changed his life.”

a) I explained my amazement to them. Being quick to note that I was not shocked that reading the Bible made such a difference. I was just shocked that anyone was actually listening to what I said.

C. Anyway, as you may have noticed, I stopped using the phrase a few years ago because it seemed a bit dishonest. During that time, I kept expanding my own devotional practices out of need.

1. What I had been doing – which was longer than 10 + 10 (but, studying the Bible and prayer is my day job) no longer felt adequate to prepare me to face the day.

2. It started to feel to me as though the volume and velocity of culture was becoming more powerful, so I needed to up my devotional practices in order to be more shaped by the Gospel than I was by culture.

D. I don’t struggle much with anger, anxiety or depression – which I highlight because they seem to be on the rise.

1. The rise of anger is pretty obvious.

2. I mention anxiety and depression because I know that something like one in eight people are on some type of anti-depressant.

E. I don’t struggle much with those three, but increasingly I fight despair.

F. If you have been listening – or reading the Friday Update - you know I have been drawing attention to the good things that are happening.

1. I don’t feel much need to list all the unsettling things out there - the polarization and rancor; inflation, debt, crime, falling birthrate, Russia, Taiwan, moral confusion. I am pretty sure you can populate that list on your own.

2. But I have felt the need to list what is going right. And so, for example, last Friday I linked to a recent David Brooks article in The Atlantic on how many things are going right in the United States. I don’t agree with everything he said – but I passed it along because:

- a) it's not the nature of the news to tell us about those things.
 - b) And I am finding that in addition to more time in God's Word, I need to be on the lookout for the good.
 - 3. For a variety of reasons, I now have to work harder to ensure that my inner world is stronger than the outer world. We need different skills to kayak in level five rapids than we do if we are kayaking in a pond.¹
 - G. Jesus speaks to some of this in today's passage, which has a lot going on in it.
- II. By way of quick review, we are now in week four of our study of the gospel of John.
- A. This sermon series is called THE LIFE and we are exploring together *the life* that Jesus is inviting into.
 - 1. In the first week we were in John 12. I used *Les Mis* to talk about grace, we explored Jesus talking about his death.
 - 2. In the second we looked at the call to serve – noting how Jesus used his power for others, even washing their feet and telling us to do the same.
 - 3. Last week we looked at the “new commandment” he gives to us, which is to use his example of love (agape love) as the template.
 - B. So we can say: It is a life of humility, a life of service, and a life of love.
 - C. Today we move through the first half of John 14, which is a painful chapter
 - 1. Jesus has disappointed the disciples. They thought they had hitched their wagon to a fast horse. They thought they had a great internship. They thought they were on the ground floor for a hot IPO. Jesus was going to overthrow Rome. They were set up to have a lot of power. But he has just told them he is about to die.
- III. John 14:1. **Do not let your hearts be troubled.**
- A. This, of course, is what you say to people whose hearts are troubled. Their hearts are troubled because he just told them he was going to die.
 - 1. And the more alert they are, the more troubled they should be. Because there is no one ready to step in and replace Jesus. There are organizations that have lots of leaders. When someone goes down it's the next person up. There are organizations with a number of number twos just waiting to be number ones. Jesus and his disciples are not one of those teams. In fact, they not only do not have any number twos, they do not appear to have any number threes.
 - 2. One of the amazing things about Jesus is how he turns a group of fours and fives into a global movement. He aligns a group of misfits and also-rans into the founders of the most successful organization in history.
 - a) I'm reading *Lights Out* – the story of GE's unwinding after Jack Welch turned it over to Jeff Immelt. The book makes two things clear:
 - (1) how hard it is do succession planning
 - (2) And how hard it is to keep a successful organization going.
 - (a) Organizations that look like they are going to go on forever – Kodak, Compaq, Blockbuster, Toys-R-Us – often do not last a decade.

(3) If all Jesus did was launch the church – which is still going after 2,000 years - he would go down as one of the most remarkable leaders ever. The fact that He did many other things, and the fact that he launched the church with the people he launched it with – makes him even more amazing.

3. Now, the disciples are going to prove to be exceptional leaders in part because of the Holy Spirit. There is more going on here.

4. But my point right now is, if you are one of the 12 and Jesus says he is about to die, and you look around to see who will take over, it's pretty clear no one is ready for that assignment.

a) Peter will emerge over time. And James, Christ's brother will step into the role of Bishop of Jerusalem. And later Paul will bring his leadership chops to the movement.

b) But at the moment Jesus says he is going to die, well, that is really bad news for all kinds of reasons. You are in deep weeds.

B. Before we move on, notice something else – though Jesus is about to die, He does not appear to be very unsettled by that.

1. Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he will be troubled. Profoundly. But that is not because he is going to die, that is because He is going to suffering the wrath of God against sin. He is going to be made sin and separated from the Father.

2. Jesus does not seem unnerved about his death.

3. I raise this because many today are scared to die. Perhaps you are.

a) I am not asking you to be excited about death – to channel Paul, “to live is Christ and to die is gain” – but you can be. And you certainly can be free of the fear.

4. I think my Dad got this right. And it was a gift to us. When he was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 80, he said, “There is no bad ending here. If I live on that's great. I love my life. I love your mother. I am having fun. But if I die I get to go to be with Jesus, which is better. I'm good. Do not worry about me.”

a) He had some concerns about the moment of death, which the doctor was able to address.

b) The doctor assured him that he would go peacefully – and he did.

5. But I hear a lot of fear out there and I want to say: Men and women, that does not have to be the case. Death has lost its sting. Death has been defeated. Death is not the end.

6. Paul – who likely had some idea of what was to come. I suspect Paul is talking about himself in 2 Corinthians 12, when he talks about a man who was called up to the third heaven, is anxious to die. “To live is Christ and to die is gain.”

a) I'm not thinking most of us will be excited to die, but we need not fear it.

C. I think part of the problem – which we will try to address later in this series – is that people know so little about what is to come, and most of what you know is wrong.

D. There are several camps out there that loosely operate under a Christian umbrella:

1. There is a half-baked, tech-driven optimism, Utopian-progressivism that holds that science is going to discover the cure for everything and we will live on – in our bodies or after we download our brain onto a hard-drive.
 - a) I saw in the news this week – for the first time in a while – the idea of the Day of Singularity. This is when humans and technology seamlessly merge. The idea is that once AI gets cranking it will accelerate into a path forward.
 - b) If I thought it was possible I would think it sounded like a nightmare.
 2. There is a pseudo-Christian, largely Gnostic view that ignores the both the resurrection and what the New Testament says about the kingdom God will bring – and suggests that we live on in a spirit-world - in some mystical, magical, ethereal never-never land. Which sounds phenomenally boring.
 3. Of course, today, increasingly what is out there is the big, incoherent mish-mash in which people pick and choose what they want to believe and act as if reality will adapt.
- E. If you are scared of dying you need to spend more time understanding who Jesus is and what he did in the resurrection. And also learn to trust Him, because he promised his followers he had this under control.

IV. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.²

- A. But what is clear is that Jesus does not see death as the end. And his view of everything is shaped by his view of what comes next.
- B. This is where I say – again – Eternity Changes Everything
 1. If what we see is all there is. If the materialists are right. If there is no God. If there is no life after we die, then following Jesus – heeding his call to humility and service and sacrifice. Elevating the needs of others ahead of our own. Focusing on the poor and oppressed – it does not make any sense.
 2. And that isn't me saying that. That is me pointing you to Paul's comments in I Corinthians 15. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then Christians are to be pitied.
- C. But if Jesus did rise from the dead. If Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection. If those who follow Christ are going to live forever, then we are fools unless we live today in light of forever. We are fools unless we store up our treasure in heaven, where moth and rust cannot destroy and thieves cannot steal.
- D. Jesus is not just telling us how to get along now. He is telling us how to live in light of forever. Eternity Changes Everything.

V. Jesus says: I am going ahead of you to prepare a place for you. I will come back for you and take you there. V4: You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas (this would be Thomas the doubter. The one who doesn't play along. If something doesn't make sense to him he says it. And here – it's sort of funny, really – he says, “we have no idea where you are going.)

VI. Jesus says, “You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”³ This is a famous and important passage.

- A. It got a lot of attention in the first century because:
 1. in it, Jesus subtly leverages the Divine Name of God – I AM.
 2. And because of the way it builds on itself.
 - a) Jesus isn’t just the way to God, he is the destination – He is God;
 - b) And Jesus isn’t just a teacher of truth, he is truth.
 3. Once again, he’s made this big claim. Jesus makes it clear that he is not simply a teacher to be listened to but God to be worshipped.
- B. By the way, this passage gets a lot of attention today because it is so counter-cultural. So offensive. Jesus makes a big, bold, exclusive claim. And we hate this.
 1. I will note that those who push back on exclusive claims do so by making an exclusive claim. They say to people, you can’t tell others that their views are wrong. Which involves telling others that their views are wrong.
 2. I will note that the real issue isn’t whether we like the statement or not, the question is – is it true? And by that – we will actually be looking at the idea of truth in John 19 – but for the sake of understanding this passage, I will simply note: the question is, does it line up with reality.
- C. Lots of people say that religions are all alike – that they are all equally true (or equally false).
 1. No. There is some overlap when it comes to ethics – how we are to treat others. But not overlap beyond that. Not on: the nature of God, the nature of right and wrong, eternal life. Not on how we obtain eternal life.

VII. Moving on. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

- A. Jesus reveals God because He is God. John’s Gospel opens with that claim: Jesus is the Word and the Word is God
- B. The first lines of Hebrews opens noting how Jesus is “the exact representation of his being.”

VIII. Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?”

- A. The answer is clearly “No.” They were expecting political maneuvering by Jesus. They did not know him.
- B. Which sets up the question: How well do you know Jesus?
 1. Jesus is clearly a bit frustrated with Philip for not knowing him better.
 2. Philip had walked with Jesus for three years and Jesus expected Philip to understand certain significant and foundational truths.

3. How long have you walked with God? Does your level of spiritual discernment reflect that. If you made a decision for Christ twenty years ago, are you twenty years down the path, or are you reliving the first year over and over?

C. You can hear a bit of indignant frustration on Jesus' part here. You can imagine him thinking:

1. The blind see, the deaf hear, the sick are made well, the dead are raised to life;

2. I have walked on water, calmed the storm and multiplied food.

3. I am of the tribe of Benjamin and the House of David. I have preached Good News to the Poor – and otherwise fulfilled a lot of the promises made about the Messiah;

4. I have modeled love and forgiveness.

5. And I have told you in all kinds of ways that I am God. Would you please open your eyes and see what is clear to see.

IX. V10: **Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?**

A. In fairness to the disciples, the Jews are the last people on earth who can be expected to understand how Jesus could be God.

1. As Jews, they daily rehearsed the Shema – which proclaimed that there was one God. Deuteronomy 6:4

2. Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And as for you, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength

3. In many ways, what made them unique was their belief in one God.

a) They were surrounded by polytheists, and the way to get along was to play along with everyone else. It was to agree that there were lots of gods.

b) Which is not that unlike today. Today we are expected to affirm that there are lots of gods and lots of truths and the way to get along is to go along.

4. The Jews starting point was: there is one God and He is in heaven and unapproachable. So, you can see why it was hard for them to think that Jesus – who was next to them – was also God. But that is what they became persuaded of.

X. **The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority.** Jesus has such powerful words. Here he says, he says them and God gives them power.

XI. **Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.** Remember, the miracles were signs. They were not principally about fixing problems, they were about drawing attention to Jesus. They were flashing neon arrows at him and screaming, “pay attention.”

XII. Now we get a shift from what Jesus is saying and doing to what the disciples will do. V12: **Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.**⁴

- A. There has been a foundation set up with Jesus saying things and God doing them to know, the disciples saying things and God acting on them.
- B. There are a couple things to note here.
 - 1. First, the contrast in v. 12 is not finally between Jesus' works and his disciples' works but between the works of Jesus that he himself performed during the days of his flesh, and the works that he performs through his disciples after his death and exaltation.
 - 2. And second, what is meant by "believe." What does it mean to believe in Jesus?
- C. Jesus then immediately links this to prayer. Believe in me. I am what is important. I am setting everything up. I will send the Holy Spirit. I will answer your prayers and ensure that this movement advances.

XIII. V13: And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

- A. There is more.
 - 1. We pull all of this stuff apart. The Gospels and the letters were meant to be heard in one sitting. Sometimes the chapter breaks are harmful.
- B. Jesus will pivot to talking about the Holy Spirit – which is next week. But before that he says: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
 - 1. And in his letter – in 1 John, John will later say if you do not keep my commandments you do not love God. And if you say you do, you are a liar.
 - 2. There is a clear link between loving God and the ability to keep his commandments.
 - a) Dallas Willard has this great line in which he says, "Keeping the commandments of God is either impossible or easy." If we love God we spend enough time with God that he begins to transform us into the kind of people who can keep the commandments.
- C. We will return to this next week.

XIV. For now let me return to my opening comments that I have found it necessary to increase the amount of time I spend in the Book because the volume and velocity of culture is picking up. And to focus on Jesus, who – high level – is telling his followers:

- A. I am going to die.
- B. Don't get stressed out. There is a plan. I'm going to the Father. I will be back. Trust me.
- C. If you are having difficulty managing the moment, let me encourage you to spend more time with Jesus – in prayer and Bible reading.

¹ There are six levels, with VI being unnavigable. V being Major obstacles hard to avoid. IV Whitewater with obstacles and more technical skills. III Fun Waves with Thrill Factor requiring some technical skill. II being Waves that make fun splashes and I being Moving Water over shallow riverbed.

² It is not perfectly clear what return Jesus is referring to: 1) His coming again after the Resurrection?; 2) His coming to them in the form of the Holy Spirit?; or 3) Or His coming again at the end of the age.

³ The meditation of Thomas à Kempis is often quoted here: Follow thou me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated.

⁴ Josh Moody argues that Jesus did not mean a greater quantity or quality of miracles. He meant a greater kind of miracle – i.e., evangelism . (Josh Moody, *John for You*). *D.A. Carson writes*: In short, the works that the disciples perform after the resurrection are greater than those done by Jesus before his death insofar as the former belong to an age of clarity and power introduced by Jesus' sacrifice and exaltation. Both Jesus' words and his deeds were somewhat veiled during the days of his flesh; even his closest followers, as the foregoing verses make clear, grasped only part of what he was saying. But Jesus is about to return to his Father, he is about to be glorified, and in the wake of his glorification his followers will know and make known all that Jesus is and does, and their every deed and word will belong to the new eschatological age that will then have dawned. The 'signs' and 'works' Jesus performed during his ministry could not fully accomplish their true end until after Jesus had risen from the dead and been exalted. Only at that point could they be seen for what they were. By contrast, the works believers are given to do through the power of the eschatological Spirit, after Jesus' glorification, will be set in the framework of Jesus' death and triumph, and will therefore more immediately and truly reveal the Son. Thus greater things is constrained by salvation-historical realities. In consequence many more converts will be gathered into the messianic community, the nascent church, than were drawn in during Jesus' ministry (cf. 15:26–27; 17:20; 20:21, 29). The contrast itself, however, turns not on raw numbers but on the power and clarity that mushroom after the eschatological hinge has swung and the new day has dawned. The contrast between the greatness of John the Baptist and the greatness of the least in the kingdom is not entirely dissimilar (cf. Carson, Matt, pp. 262–269, on Mt. 11:7–15).