

I. Good morning. I hope you had a good week. Glad you are here. Not sure about you, but I find the cadence of gathering to pause, reflect, pray, sing, confess, worship, be together with others who share a common hope and allegiance to Christ, very helpful.

A. This is the fifth week in a series on the second half of John's Gospel – which means, we're looking at the last week of Christ's life.

1. In the first half of that book, John makes it clear that Jesus is God.

2. In the second half we focus on:

a) Christ's death and resurrection.

b) We see how all the story lines of the Bible come together in Christ.

c) And there are key teachings and pivotal events that help us understand what is going on and what is expected of us.

B. Our particular focus in this series revolves around understanding what it looks like to follow Jesus.

1. John ends his Gospel explaining that he has written what he has written so that: **you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**<sup>1</sup> We are trying to figure out what that abundant life is and how to get it.

C. So far we have noted calls to: embrace humility, serve others and love well.

D. There is more going on in the text. Last week we noted that Jesus told the disciples not to be troubled. That although he was headed to his death, he had everything under control. He talked about eternal life and going to prepare for their arrival.

E. But today it's sort of back to this call to serve. This is actually a dense passage. Let's walk through it and then I want to make a key observation and set you up for a next step.

II. John 14:15: **If you love me keep my commands.** If you *agape* me, do what I am telling you to do. **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth.**

A. This is the Holy Spirit – who is God. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Godhead. In the Bible, He goes by various names: the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, the Comforter, the advocate. In the KJV He is referred to as the Holy Ghost. Some translations just go with the Greek term, *paraclete*.

B. The Holy Spirit is a person. Always a Him, never an "it." When the Holy Spirit comes into your life, you are not getting some nebulous force. God Himself is coming to dwell within you.

C. He is particularly involved in various ways in our salvation and sanctification. We will do a deeper dive on the Holy Spirit later in this series. For today let me simply note, a big part of the focus of the Holy Spirit is to make us holy. He is not more holy than the Father or the Son. But he makes us holy. He drives our sanctification.

III. **The world cannot accept him** – Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit. Again, always a him, never an "it." **The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him.**

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<sup>1</sup> John 20:31

- A. The Holy Spirit is not visible. And He does not draw attention to himself. But when we place our faith in Christ, part of what happens at that instant is that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit.” (Paul writes about this in Ephesians 1:13). It may feel like a process, but there is a point.
- B. And then – as we yield, obey, listen, follow - He shapes us. Part of what we need to learn is how to more fully be directed by God. Let me jump ahead and weave in some other passages and note that the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit will ripen His fruit in our life.
1. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These qualities emerge – this fruit ripens – in our life as we are changed by the Spirit.
- C. By the way, the word for “know” here - **The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him** – is *ginsoko*. And the thrust of this suggests more than head knowledge. More than knowing about.
1. When it comes to “knowing” the Hebrews had very different views than the Greeks. The Greeks held that you knew something intellectually. The Hebrews said, you knew about something when you lived it out.
  2. The easiest way to differentiate these is to note that in the Greek world, you could be an expert on bikes without ever having ridden one, or you could be a very immoral person and teach ethics. In the Hebrew world, that would not happen. And we pick up on that Hebrew (that Jewish) approach, when Jesus says – if you love me, follow me. Obey what I teach. Embrace my plans.
- D. Jesus says, if you are my disciple, then part of the way I will take care of you after I die (which is about to happen) is that I will ask the Father to send a Helper to be with you. I’m not going to leave you alone. I am leaving but I will send help.

**IV. V17: The world does not know him, but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.** Again, there is a call here to relax. Jesus is assuring them that he has things under control. **Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”**

A. I said this passage is dense. There is a lot more of this dense language to come in John. Some of the reason it is dense is because it talks about heavy topics (such as the relationship between the Father and Son – we’ll see that in John 17). Some of the reason it’s dense is that it is iterative. Scripture tells us that we do not love first – God does. **While we were sinners, Christ dies for us.** God’s love comes first. But it also says that we need to love – and if we do, then we can obey. And if we obey, the Spirit of God shapes us even more, which is a good thing. You can end up asking some chicken and egg questions.

V. **V22: Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”** An important question on many levels. Judas is likely is asking it because he is still thinking that the Messiah is going to bring peace for the Jews by overthrowing Rome. So he is very confused.

**VI.** Jesus' answer is likely not what Judas is hoping for. V23: **Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.**

**VII.** Then, **These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.** We heard this kind of talk last week.<sup>2</sup> The words I speak come from the Father. This is reinforcing how God the Father and God the Son are working as one on all of this.

**VIII.** **“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.** (Again, part of what it means to grow in faith is to learn to hear the Spirit guide and direct us). He settles our heart. He calls up the Words we have memorized. He gives us insight.

**IX.** **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.** V28: **“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.**

A. As a quick aside here, don't fall into the Arianism here. Do not hear that the Father “being greater” suggests that Jesus is somehow less than fully God. I almost did not get my license 35 years ago over this issue.

B. Getting a license is not as big a deal today as it used to be. In order to officiate at a wedding you need to be licensed. At this point, you can get this done in five minutes.

C. It varies from denomination to denomination. I was doing college ministry that was based at a Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterians were not going to license me because I had not gone to one of their schools and did not line up with them on some doctrinal issues. But the Free Church wasn't going to license me because I was on staff at a Presbyterian Church. It took a lot of lobbying to get an interview. Among other things, I had to write a 20 page paper spelling out my beliefs. And the first question in the interview was, “what is your view of functional subordination within the Trinity?” They wanted to be sure that I understood and affirmed that Jesus was fully God. Equal to the Father. He has another role. He defers to the Father – “not my will but yours be done!” But He is fully God.

D. However – at this moment, he is “emptied.” Philippians 2 tells us this. He will be elevated upon his return. He will have the glory he had before the incarnation. And, of course, he will be further elevated because of how he served – what he did (for you and me).

E. What Jesus says to them is, “if you really loved me, you'd be glad I'm returning to the Father – glad that I am returning to the sphere where I belong, to the glory I had with the Father before the world began.

**X.** **I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming.** One of the many names of Satan is “prince of this world.” Satan, the Devil, the deceiver. **He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.**

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<sup>2</sup> Verse 10.

- A. Jesus is obeying the Father and stepping into the role of the scape goat.
- B. He loves the Father and obeys the Father and wants his readers to know that.

XI. OK, as noted, this is a dense passage. It's a great passage. It contains all kinds of promises to those who obey: the Holy Spirit, life, unity with God, the love of the Father, greater understanding of Christ's teachings, peace. There are some great promises here. But it's a bit confusing. No doubt the disciples were confused.

- A. Later on, things will make more sense for them. They get forty days with Jesus between his resurrection and ascension, during which time he explains how the Scriptures were always pointing to him. In Luke 24 it says he starts with the Books of Moses (So, with Genesis) and unpacks things for them.
- B. At the moment, it's all a bit confusing and unsettling. Because he says he is going to die. And because he says: if you love me you will obey.
- C. And by the way, later on John will put a sharper point on it. In I John 2 he will say:
  1. **If you say you love me, but you do not obey, then you are a liar.**
  2. It is a profoundly unbiblical and indefensible idea that one can truly love Jesus Christ and be his disciple and at the same time consciously, openly, repeatedly and unrepentantly live in opposition to what Jesus has commanded us to do or not to do.
- D. I want to direct your attention to an idea and then give you a bit of time to reflect and repent before we come to communion.

XII. Back to the first verse in our passage – **If you love me, keep my commands.**

- A. This is a classic “if /then” equation. If X then Y. If this, then that. If you *agape* me,<sup>3</sup> then you will obey (or keep – the Greek word is *tereo*) my commandments. Love leads to obedience. Obedience proves love. No obedience? No love.
- B. This is a profoundly counter cultural statement. Today we feel as though we should be free to chart our own path and declare our own truth. The idea of rules we must obey is anathema.
  1. Of course, reality eventually asserts itself. We can only suspend it for so long. It bites back.
  2. And we do not get rid of rules, we just change them out. We get rid of the Ten Commandments and replace them with 10 million other laws.

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin VanHoozer, a professor at Trinity and prominent theologian, wrote: “There is probably no more damaging picture distorting our present day lives and our understanding of the God of the gospel, than “love.” Love is often depicted as a desire to be fulfilled (romanticism) or as accepting people for who they are (inclusivism), or as loyalty to one’s own people group (tribalism). The love stories produced by Hollywood suggest that fulfilling love’s desire is an unadulterated good, even if it involves adultery, if the marriage is stale and unfulfilling. Love is presented as an intrinsically good emotion, never mind the sexes and genders. Some believe that love must be “free” of all obligations, especially the social bondage of monogamous marriage. Given this romanticized, sentimentalized, and political image, it is no surprise that many view the Bible’s portrait of God as a jealous judge to be past its sell-by-date.”

C. But that is not the focus. If we are alert – if we are self aware, if we are pausing to reflect. If we have made space for the Holy Spirit to be heard – then we aware of our sin. We are aware of our failure to keep his commands – and this is a profoundly unsettling passage. We are being told – if you love me, you will keep my commands and I will send my Holy Spirit and everything is going to be OK. But as we reflect on our heart, we realize that we do not love God as we should. We do not keep his commandments as we should.

### XIII. What to do?

A. I am going to adopt the “key swing thought” approach on this. If you are a golfer you know that you cannot step up to the ball with 11 ideas of how to address it. You need to think of just one.

B. There is more than one thing that could be – perhaps should be – said here, but I am going to highlight one point. Of course we need: to try harder, and to fear God, and to be in community with other Christ followers.

C. But I want to draw your attention to the fact that the emphasis in John 14:1 is not on obedience it is on loving God. Jesus says: If you love God you will obey. If you love God, obedience will follow.

1. In talking about this verse, Dallas Willard noted that obeying God is either easy or impossible. If we love God, it’s easy. If we do not. We cannot. If we do not love God, we cannot keep up obedience.

D. A baby is a great way to see this. In watching Jason and Hannah care for Brynn, we have been reminded of how much work an infant is. A lot. But it does not feel like work. The care and commitment given to a newborn that you love does not feel like work. It’s easy to do. However, that level of care for someone else – who you did not like – who is 28 or 68 and feels entitled, is unthinkable. You could not keep it up year after year.

E. Love fuels Herculean effort. And Jesus is telling us we need to focus on loving God. So... how do we do that? My heart goes where my heart goes. I love what I love. I cannot direct my heart. I have two big ideas – and they are big so you really need to tease these out in your small group.

1. The first idea is: look. Spend time with. Read about. Listen to. God is wonderful and beautiful and the more you learn the easier it is to love and be awed. Wowed. He has withheld no good thing from you. He has provided for you. The more you look at God, the better things get. The more you understand who He is, the easier He is to love.

2. The second idea is: do what you can do. We can only do what we can do – but we can do that. We cannot control our heart, but we can choose what to do with our time or what to think about. We can control what we do with our money – which does shape our heart. (In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also). This isn’t only saying, you can tell what someone loves by what they do with their money. It is also saying, what you do with your money determines what you will love).

3. This is where spiritual disciplines kick in. We can’t change our heart, but we can read the Bible. We can strive to obey. We can join a small group. We can set aside time each day to pray. We can serve. We can make attending church a priority. We can fast. We can choose to forgive. We can be generous. There are things we can do. And when we do what we can do, the Holy Spirit begins to change our heart.

F. Men and women – at one level, this is not complicated. I am not saying it is easy. Our hearts are broken – and in many cases, calloused, hardened.

XIV. So, one of the can dos is to confess our failures and ask God to fill us with his Spirit.

A. We are going to move into a time of reflection and prayer;

1. Dustin / Ben / Eric – this is where next steps are fluid. I envision praying a short prayer of “meet with us now.” Which would be followed by a musical interlude that leads into prayer (corporate prayer, pastorally led prayer, prayer that Eric leads from song).

2. And then all of this is followed by communion.

3. BTW, sermon is not done. I have more work to do on it, but I will work hard to keep it shorter.