

The Blessings of Jesus' Absence: Part 2

John 14:7–14

Studies in John #33

ABSENCE makes the heart grow fonder in our personal relationships. We began to see last Sunday how Jesus' bodily absence should make our hearts grow fonder for him. Like a lovesick wife who's husband is away so we long for our husband to return so we can be with him forever.

Here in the Upper Room Discourse Jesus is preparing his disciples for his death and ultimately for his ascension back to the joys of the Father and Holy Spirit. This is called his glorification. Hearing that Jesus is going to be absent from them in the near future the disciples are deeply disturbed; we saw the word John uses speaks of emotional and psychological trouble or trauma. Yet what Jesus now explains is that his absence has tremendous blessing for his first disciples and for all disciples. Application: His absence to us in the decadent West exhorts us to put our hope in something more than politics, power, and wealth. His absence to the destitute in South America and Africa lifts hearts to a great home and greater treasure in eternity. His absence to the persecuted church in Asia comforts with the knowledge that they're being identified with the suffering Jesus who soon will bring them rest.

We saw the first blessing is eternal life. All of us who believe already have eternal life, but Jesus is going to leave his disciples to prepare an even

greater place for us in the heavenly temple. Here in verses 7–14 he continues to describe yet another blessing: a clearer revelation of the Father.

IN THE PERSON OF JESUS (VV. 7–12)

Children: Jesus says to his disciples, whom he says are his “little children,” that he’s going to prepare a place for them in his Father’s house. Peter wants to know where just like you do when you mom or dad go away. Sometimes they even say to you it’s a place you’ve been to before and when they come back and then take you, you’ll remember the way. Jesus tells his disciples that they know the way to where he’s going. But Thomas is confused: we don’t know where you’re going so how can we know how to get there? Jesus proclaims that he is “the way” saying, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (v. 6). When we believe in Jesus we are brought into relationship with the Father. He continues in verse 7: **“If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.”** Jesus’ absence means A CLEARER REVELATION OF THE FATHER *IN THE PERSON OF JESUS*.

All throughout John’s Gospel story we’ve been hearing Jesus tell his disciples and the crowds that the Father sent him down from heaven. There’s something about God that becomes clearer with Jesus. “The Lord is one” was the great confession of the Israelites in contrast to all their neighbors. But

there's something about that oneness of God that comes into clearer focus. That's why in the very opening of the Gospel we read, "No one has ever seen God," which the Lord told Moses, But then John says, "the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" (1:18). On the cusp of going to the cross Jesus says, "**from now on**"—circle that—"you do know him and have seen him" (v. 7). Jesus' disciples were the first to get an enhanced view of God as the history of salvation was moving to its climax in the cross.

Application: I mentioned at our men's theology discussion a few weeks ago an illustration I found in the writing of B.B. Warfield. The Old Testament is like your living room with all its furniture but it's completely dark. You're eyes adjust a little so you can see the shadowy outlines of the furniture so that when you walk through you can navigate. But with the coming of Jesus Christ all the blinds, shutters, and curtains are opened so that the room is filled with light. What's different in the room? What new furniture is there? None! Now you can see it. Similarly the New Testament illumines and interprets the Old.

Having heard Peter reply then Thomas, Philip gets some boldness and says, "**Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us**" (v. 8). He's saying, "Just give us one more thing to make this revelation sufficient." Like Moses who said, "Show me your glory." But happened then? The Lord hid Moses in a crack of a rock, passed by, and all Moses saw was the backside of God, as it

were. Now what? Jesus is saying, “I am sufficient.” We definitely sense something of Jesus’ human disappointment here: **“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?”** (v. 9) But then he reiterates: **“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”** (v. 9) In the words of J.C. Ryle: “The more we know Christ, the more we know the Father.”¹

There’s something really important to see here. When Jesus says, **“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,”** he’s saying more than just, “in me you see what God is *like*.” Jesus is more than an illustration of who God is. What Jesus is saying is that now the picture of God in the Old Testament is coming into sharper and clearer focus. He’s saying what he said back chapter 10: “I and the Father are one.” What does that mean? It means Jesus, the Son of God who has taken to himself true humanity in the incarnation, is of the same substance as God. He’s not *like* God; he is God! The eternal Son has come on a mission from the Father to accomplish the work of redemption that his people in all times and in all places would be led back into fellowship with God. “But if Jesus saying, ‘I am God and so is the Father,’ how can God still be one? Aren’t there two, plus the Holy Spirit, so three?” Look at verses 10 and 11: **“Do you not believe that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me?*”** (v.

10) **“Believe me that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me*”** (v. 11). The clearer revelation now is that this one God exists mysteriously as unity yet in diversity as Father and Son (and Holy Spirit) so much so that the Son can say he’s *in* the Father and the Father is *in* the Son. The Son is “the radiance of the glory of God” (Heb. 1:3a) because he shares the glory as God! The Son is “the exact imprint of [God’s] nature” (Heb. 1:3b) because he shares the nature of God! As we confess in the Nicene Creed, the Son of God is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.” **Application:** Why is this so important? Ligonier just released its 2018 version of “The State of Theology” survey here in the States. I’ll ask you statement 6: “True or false. Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.” Among people of all Christian faith traditions, 42% strongly agreed! Another 15% agreed somewhat while yet another 15% were not sure. That’s 72% of professing Christians who at least in words agree with the ancient condemned heretic Arius against whom the Nicene Creed was written! Worse yet is that 59% of so-called evangelicals “strongly agreed!”² Brothers and sisters, we have work to do!

Here’s Jesus’ appeal: **“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. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves”** (vv. 10b–11).

IN THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH (VV. 12–14)

We gotta take up verses 12–14 next. But if you look at them, what are they about? Prayer. It’s interesting that he shifts from saying his absence brings a clearer revelation of the Father in himself to saying his absence brings A CLEARER REVELATION OF THE FATHER *IN THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH*. We’ll see the connection as we go through briefly.

“Truly, truly”—there’s Jesus’ **“*amen, amen*”** oath again—**“I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the *works* that I do; and greater works (*things*) than these will he do, because I am going to the Father”** (v. 12). Notice how Jesus speaks of “knowing” in verse 7, “seeing” in verse 9, and “believing” in verses 11–12. And this promise is to **whoever** believes, not just the disciples-turned apostles. Yet there is a sense in which the **works** that Jesus did are replicated by the apostles, which is why the New Testament can speak of “the signs of an apostle” (2 Cor. 12:12). But Jesus says more: **“greater *things* than these [works] will he do.”** When Jesus fed the five thousand men then began to preach, what happened? Those thousands left. When the apostles preached after the ascension and pouring out of the Spirit, what happened? Three thousand on Pentecost were saved and soon after their number was already up to five thousand! Why did the apostles do even greater things than Jesus? Jesus’ absence: **“because I am going to the Father.”** Jesus will soon be

glorified in his cross, resurrection and ascension. Then he will receive the Holy Spirit to gift upon the his people, who will then do the work of gathering a kingdom for the Son! The **greater things** of the apostles was the Gentile mission. The **greater things** for us are the continuance of that mission.

Here's the connection between all that Jesus is saying about the Father being more clearly known in the person of Jesus and the prayers of the church. Look at verses 13–14. What is the means by which the ascended and absent Savior will enable all who believe to perform the **greater things** of preaching? Prayer: **“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do”**—and again in verse 14—**“If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”** I want you to notice the context of this promise. What is the **whatever** and the **anything** Jesus is referring to? The **greater things** the church does in preaching to the lost of seeing them saved, baptized, and enrolled in the number of the faithful. This has *absolutely nothing to do* with health, wealth, and prosperity. Nothing! Jesus absence shouldn't lead our hearts to be troubled but our hearts to be enflamed with preaching and praying. That's what Jesus says is our task. This is what Jesus says we should be doing! Why? **“That the Father”**—whom we know in his clearer revelation as distinct from yet unified with the Son and Spirit—**“may be glorified in the Son.”** Let's give him glory by preaching and praying!

Notes

¹ Ryle, 3.72

² <https://thestateoftheology.com>