

ASSURANCE AND TRUST
(FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 2011)

SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 14:1-14

INTRODUCTION

This evening I am beginning a series on John 14-17, that Lord willing, we will cover in the next 7 or 8 years in our Good Friday services.

In previous years we have given attention to the first portion of John 13, where Jesus gave a powerful example of love and service by washing the dirty and smelly feet of His disciples. Following this beautiful portion of John's gospel, Jesus spoke of his betrayal. "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." In John 13:27 we read that Satan entered Judas. Jesus spoke to Judas and told him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." After Judas left, Jesus continued to give instruction to His disciples. He gave them the new commandment we read in verse 34, "that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." At the end of chapter 13, Jesus spoke of Peter's three-fold denial.

Understandably the disciples were troubled. They were troubled by the announcement that one of them would betray Jesus. They were troubled by Jesus' words that He would be with them for only a little while longer. They were troubled by the announcement that Peter, the spokesman and one of the key disciples, would deny Jesus three times, and this before the rooster would crow his third cry.

Our circumstances do not parallel the disciples very closely, this Good Friday evening. But Jesus' instruction in John 14:1-14 is given for your assurance and to call you to continued belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the way, the

truth, and the life, the only way to the Father, the one who makes the Father known.

I would like to you to consider four points of assurance found in John 14:1-14.

1. Assurance that Jesus Christ's sufferings and ascension are for your good
2. Assurance that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life
3. Assurance that in Jesus you know the Father
4. Assurance that the work of Christ continues in an even greater way

1. ASSURANCE THAT JESUS CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND ASCENSION ARE FOR YOUR GOOD

John 14-17 is to be noted for its beautiful, comforting, and assuring language as well as for its rich theological insights.

As Jesus continued His teaching, His first word was to bring comfort to His disciples and call them to continued belief in the Father and in Him. I have already mentioned several reasons why the disciples were troubled; their hearts were filled inward turmoil.

Jesus told them, **Let not your hearts be troubled.** And how was this command to be obeyed? You believe in God or this could be translated, Believe in God; believe also in me. You can't simply settle your troubled heart apart from trusting in God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In verses 2-4, Jesus gave assurance to His disciples and to you that His sufferings and death and His ascension are for your good.

These verses have been interpreted in a variety of ways that are not all in agreement. Is Jesus referring simply to His death and resurrection or His ascension? When in the words of verse 3 does Jesus come again to receive us? It is not profitable for us now to consider this controversy except to say, there is no reason for denying what might be called the traditional understanding of this passage.

Jesus here in these verses was speaking ultimately of His ascension to Heaven, to His Father's house. However, we must also see reference here to the cross. It was through His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection that Jesus was preparing the way and also preparing a place for us in Heaven.

The word **mansion** perhaps is not the best translation today. We think of a big and beautiful house, hopefully with a nice yard, and perhaps a view of mountains or an ocean. Mansion is an old word in English, and it can simply mean a dwelling place, not necessarily large or spacious.¹ This is not to say that Heaven in anyway will be less wonderful than you might think. But the emphasis of verse 2 is that we will be with the Father and the Son. The blessing of Heaven will be the eternal fellowship that we enjoy with God. In the Father's house are many mansions, many dwelling places.

The disciples certainly did not want Jesus to suffer and die. But that was an essential part of Jesus' work in preparing a place for them and for you. The disciples did not want Jesus to leave them and ascend into Heaven, but that is also for our good. I don't know that we can fully understand the work that

¹ NET Bible, s.v. John 14:2.

Christ continues to do on our behalf, but it is better for us now that Jesus is in Heaven than for Jesus to have remained on earth.

The evil days in which we live can tempt you to question many things. Why is the world in such a mess if Jesus is ruling over Heaven and earth? Doesn't it seem that the world belongs more to Satan and his kingdom?

But such is not the case. We are not told in Scripture that Christ's ascension would mean the instant end of His enemies or evil. We are not told in Scripture how long it will take for Christ to place all His enemies under His feet. Rightfully you are troubled by evil – how important it is that you continue to trust in God in the Father and the Son and wait with assurance for that great day when Christ will come again and take us to Himself.

What a beautiful picture is described at the end of verse 3.

That where I am, there you may be also.

Here is the culmination of Christ's work and why it is good that He has gone into Heaven. It is to prepare a place for His people to be with Him in eternal fellowship with the Father and Holy Spirit.

2. ASSURANCE THAT JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

The Apostle Thomas is often known as "Doubting Thomas." Yes, Thomas did say that He would only believe if he could see in Jesus' hands the print of the nails and also then put his hand into Jesus' side. All the disciples before they came to a full understanding of Jesus and His work were not the men

that they later would become. There is good evidence that Thomas traveled as far as India in proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.²

But here in John's gospel, we see that Thomas and the other disciples did not understand the words of Jesus. Notice that Thomas was not just speaking for himself but for the other 10 disciples in verse 5. Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?

Jesus responded with some of the most important and well-known words in all of Scripture,

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus' strong and clear words give you assurance that the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ alone is not in need of updating or improvement.

Jesus has not simply shown us the way, the truth, and the life.³ No, even more, Jesus is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. And there is no other way to the Father, except through Him.

Rightfully we speak of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. But such exclusivity should never lead us to inaction. If this is something you truly believe, then it should be of great incentive for you to share the truth. Oh, that our commitment to the gospel message, the exclusivity of Jesus Christ, would give

² See more on this from Eckard Schnabel and in part class notes on NT History, Spring 2008, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 491.

us even greater commitment and opportunities in speaking this essential truth with others.

3. ASSURANCE THAT IN JESUS YOU KNOW THE FATHER

Sinclair Ferguson has observed,

“I’ve often reflected on the rather obvious thought that when the disciples were about to have the world collapse in on them, our Lord spent so much time in the Upper Room speaking to them about the mystery of the Trinity. **If anything could underline the necessity of Trinitarianism for practical Christianity, that must surely be it!**”⁴

These are very practical chapters for you to often read and study. The doctrine of the Trinity is not just for theologians to ponder but for all Christians to often consider and enjoy. You are called to live in fellowship with the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

John 14-17 contain at least 10 places where Jesus gave instruction on the doctrine of the Trinity. Here in verses 7-11, Jesus focused on His relationship with the Father.

- To know Jesus is to know the Father.
- He who has seen Jesus has seen the Father.
- Jesus did not act in His own authority. The Father who dwells in Jesus did the great works that Jesus accomplished in His public ministry.
- Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus.

⁴ Personal e-mail to Robert Letham, cited in *The Holy Trinity*, 375.

There are countless books written about the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a doctrine greater than any of us will ever say that we fully understand and can explain. But you are not left in mystery if you don't have a Ph.D. in such a great study. Jesus here gives assurance that you can believe without any doubt in the Triune nature of God.

The disciples not surprisingly needed continued instruction from Jesus on these matters. The disciples had known Jesus, of course, not as fully as they would later know Him. Jesus assured them that in knowing Him and in seeing Him they were seeing and knowing also the Father.

Philip, speaking for the disciples, requested that Jesus in some special way make God known, in similar desire as Moses in Exodus 33. Moses desired to see the fullness of God's glory. Philip wanted Jesus to show the disciples the Father. **Jesus boldly declared, he who has seen Me has seen the Father.** What a powerful statement to the divinity of Jesus Christ and also the doctrine of the Trinity.

In verse 11, Jesus spoke of the works that He did which bear witness to the unity of the Father and Son. The miracles Jesus did were given as signs. They pointed to the reality of the Father's work, the coming of the kingdom of God, was taking place in the work and ministry of Jesus.⁵

With complete confidence we can reject all supposed men and women who have throughout history claimed to bring the complete truth about God and man and the revelation of mysteries that have never been known before. Jesus indeed warned us that many would come in His name claiming to be like

⁵ Carson, 495.

Jesus in bringing new revelation. We have all the revelation we need. The challenge is to know that which Jesus has already taught us.

4. ASSURANCE THAT THE WORK OF CHRIST CONTINUES IN AN EVEN GREATER WAY

Verses 11-14 conclude this opening section with several incredible promises.

He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also, and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

How is it that those who believe in Christ are given the promise that they will do even greater works? How do we understand this?

First, we should see that any works that are being done by those who believe in Jesus should be seen as the continued work of Christ. It is Jesus who ultimately accomplishes the work that He gives to you and calls you to do.

Second, the greater works are understood in terms of the purpose for which Jesus did His miraculous works. As I mentioned from verse 11, the works Jesus did were signs. They pointed to Jesus as the Son of God, the one who was establishing the rule of God on earth. Now that we live in light of the fullness of that work, now that we live after Christ's triumphant resurrection and ascension, we live in a new age, as it were, where we are given privilege to understand in much greater measure the work of Jesus. Greater works can

now be done because we can now see and point people to see the fullness of Christ's work on earth.⁶

Jesus is not promising you that if only you believed enough you could heal people of leprosy, give sight to blind eyes, and even raise the dead. But you are able to point people to Jesus and His finished work in such a way that was not possible while He was still on the earth. And so today the gospel goes forth into every nation! You are to believe and desire to see the work of Christ continuing in great ways.

You are to ask bold promises of Christ, not merely for your own happiness or enrichment, but for the sake of seeing His glory made known to all nations and people.

The promises of Christ here stand as great challenges for you to believe, pray, and do.

Conclusion:

Our celebration of the Lord's Supper gives us the same assurances that we find in this passage.

The assurance that Jesus suffered for your benefit and that He suffered and has ascended into Heaven for your sake is also given in the signs of bread and wine.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In celebrating the Lord's Supper through faith we feast on Christ. His death and resurrection are the way. He is the Truth. He alone can give us the life which we need.

⁶ Carson, 496.

As we eat and drink you are also given assurance that you enjoy true fellowship with Jesus Christ. And our fellowship is with the Father and the Spirit also.

As we eat and drink we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. We also celebrate His work now in Heaven on our behalf until He comes.

As we eat and drink let us pray bold prayers that our faith be strengthened and that the gospel message will continue to advance in great power.

Closing Hymn: 359

Benediction – Hebrews 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead,
that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting
covenant,

make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.