

“Until He Comes”
Pastor John Bronson

John 21:20-25

April 14, 2013

Order of Worship for April 14th, title, “Until He Comes”, text, John 21:20-25

Opening Song
Welcome

Invocation: Psalm 27
Ministry Moment:

Message theme: a recap of the major lessons in John’s Gospel

Worship theme: Thanksgiving for God’s truth and dedication/consecration to His glory in all things

Opening Song:

“How Great is Our God” Overhead

Invocation: Psalm 27

Welcome

Special Music: Women’s Chorus
“Oh How I Love Jesus” Song # 92

Ministry Moment: Youth Mexico Missions Report

Preparing the Heart in Song:

“Victory in Jesus” Song # 353

“I Could Sing of Your Love Forever)” Overhead

“No One Understands like Jesus” Song # 610

Offering and Offertory

Message: John 21:20-25 “Until He Comes”
Pastor John Bronson

Closing Song:

“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” Song # 602

Parting Word of Grace and Invitation to Prayer

Sunday Evening in the Word:

5:30 to 7 pm in the Church Library
A Study in 1 Peter 1 & 2

Sunday Evening in the Word
A Study in 1 Peter 1 and 2
5:30 – 7:00 pm in the Library

“The Prayer Closet”

April 14, 2013

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

Ian Carlisle: ARM to Butte County Jail: the Spirit will sustain Ian’s love for the prisoners and vision for the ministry; the Lord will raise up prayer, financial and volunteer support; the Spirit will soften the hearts and open the minds of prisoners for the gospel

President Obama: the Spirit will free him from false fears and deceptive beliefs; the Lord will protect his family and him from evil; the Lord will place godly men and women close to him for counsel and guidance

Elders and Congregation: the Lord will grant unity in discerning His will for major repair and upgrade projects on the facilities and future staff needs for ministry

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: SFC Matthew Basner, Army, son of Randy and Lou: that God would protect the health of his wife and the twins, that they would not be born too early; they are building a house because the one they have is too small, that it get finished before the twins are born and they have ample time to move in before they are born; for peace of heart and mind

Young Adult of the Week: Caleb Hammonds, son of Tom and Cindy: that the Lord reveal His plan to Caleb for his life

Please pray for our homebound family members: Hilda Chapman, Carol Koehler, Gary & Ruth Lentz, Fred & Jean Pauly

(please call the office to request updates)

I.

The Gospel of John ends in a very interesting manner. I will ask that you turn to John 21:20-25. Already last week we had opportunity to see that after the story of the earthly life of Jesus and His death and resurrection had been completed and you could have had the “Amen” for the gospel was done, we saw that John tagged on the information about Peter, restoring Peter to ministry, renewing Peter in his walk of faithful service to God and how critically important that is in terms of our understanding of the fuller purpose or larger reality of the Gospel. The Gospel does not end, the life and work of Jesus does not end when He accomplished the work on the cross and He ascends to be with the Father. Why does it not end there? It does not end there because now all that Jesus has done is entrusted to all of us, His followers. We now receive, as Jude says, that precious “deposit”, that body of truth, and we are charged by our God to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit and to take that message of salvation and carry it into the world. That was the message for Peter. Peter was charged that even though he was a man who had failed and failed grievously Jesus was restoring him, renewing him and as it were re-commissioning him and says, “Go and take care of My sheep, My lambs, My sheep.” That is a profoundly important message for the practical application of the Gospel. We are not called by our God to sit and to merely contemplate the wonderful things that God has done for us. We are called by our God now to be co-workers, fellow laborers with God in the Holy Spirit in taking that gospel to everyplace across the face of the earth, including our neighbors.

Now you might think that having done that with Peter it was time to be done! But then the Spirit of God has John write out a little addendum after that and that is what we are looking at today: John 21:20-25.

“Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, ‘Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?’ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, what about this man?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!’ So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, ‘If it is my will that he remains until I come, what is that to you?’ This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

Let us think about this a little bit. The apostle John lived a long time. Do you know what happened in the end? He died. We need to ask ourselves why John would stick these comments in at the end of the Gospel. I wonder if something happened amongst the brothers? When you read the New Testament, often times you catch from the narrative and the epistles a sense of urgency and excitement about the soon return of Jesus. Possibly what had happened amongst those early Christians was that the rumor had gone out: “Hey, John is not going to die before Jesus returns!” What do we think might have happened at that point? I think people would keep an eye on John. John would become the measure of the advance, whether or not things were still in process. But upon whom are we supposed to put our eyes? We are not supposed to keep our eye on John; we are supposed to keep our eye on Jesus. In Hebrews 12:2 we are told to fix our eyes on Jesus for He is the founder and the perfecter of our faith.

Our age is an age in which we have a huge interest in prophecies. We have dramatic teachers and preachers all across the land. We have people who make it their business to fix their eyes and to keep their eyes firmly fixed on these preachers and teachers: they turn into their channels, they get the newsletters. They are constantly excited about what is going to come next according to these teachers. Amongst the brethren there are divisions. There are debates that arise. People are looking at this teacher and that teacher, comparing notes. This is not a new problem

in the life of the church. So important an issue is this that I would like you to turn to I Corinthians I:10-17. Notice what Paul says:

“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, [here is the point] lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

Beloved, it is at the cross where our needs our met. It is therefore at the cross where we should keep our focus fixed upon what Jesus Christ has done for us. We should recognize that neither the promises of blessings now, nor the promises of the second coming, neither of these things are our strength. Our strength, our wisdom is found in the cross. It is a continual, sustained focus upon the cross of Jesus Christ and all that it means, all that it contains that is the proper focus of the Christian’s mind. At the cross Jesus died for our sins. It is at the cross that every provision was made for our redemption from sin’s curse. It is at the cross that it is decided that you and I can become the adopted children of God. It is at the cross that we realize that the way is open for the Holy Spirit to come and to dwell within us and to empower us and to instruct us. It is from the cross and in relationship to the cross that we are told we are to follow Jesus. But in this day merely to say you need to follow Jesus, in this day merely to say, “I love Jesus” is not to have said anything. There are as many definitions and descriptions of Jesus in the world today as there are people in this room. We are not invited to follow the Jesus of our preference or of our imagination. We are not invited to follow the Jesus who is preached by the person who most appeals to me personally. We are invited to follow the Jesus of the cross. He is the Jesus who lived and died on that cross. He is the Jesus that came to bear the sins of sinners and to die for sinners. It is that Jesus that we are to follow. That Jesus is not necessarily the same as the ones that are most often offered in the market place of religious ideas.

That is why, I believe, the Holy Spirit had John write those concluding words. Having travelled the whole distance through the Gospel of John and having had an opportunity to reflect on all the things Jesus said about Himself, by and large, in the end we would have this exclamation point, this focusing statement telling us, “It is Jesus; don’t forget the One who died on the cross.”

Having worked our way through John’s Gospel, I think it would be good for us to ask a couple of questions: what exactly have we learned about this Lord Who died for our sins and rose up for our justification? The Gospel of John actually presents to us not just the story of the particular individual, Jesus, but actually presents to us a way of looking at the world, a way of understand the world that you and I are now living in. I think it would be good for us to put together a few of the anchor points that help us to have that right focus.

At the very beginning of the Gospel, in John I:17 and I:18 are two climactic, dramatic, defining statements given to us by John. The first is in verse I7. It says, *“For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* So when I have my eye fixed upon Jesus Christ, that which is most prominent is God’s grace and His truth. The second statement, in v. I8, says this, *“No one has ever seen God; the only God who is at the Father’s*

side has made Him known.” When I look at Jesus, the Jesus who came, lived and then died for the sins of humanity, I am looking at the Father.

I think in those two statements we have three very important truths set in front of us that need to constantly govern our minds. The first is grace. What is grace? You and I live in this world as the objects of God’s grace. That grace is the unmerited favor of God, ours through faith. God’s love for us is not according to our merit. It is according to His purpose. Because it is according to His purpose, it is essential that we listen closely to what He has to say to us. He hasn’t saved us so that we can do well in accomplishing the things that interest us. He has saved us in order that we would fulfill His purposes in us. The second thing that He teaches is that truth is what God has revealed. There are many things to know in this world. But the things which are essential for us to think correctly and to live well are the things which God has revealed and the Spirit has put down in His Word. So no matter what we do, no matter where we go, no matter how our lives become restructured and reorganized, at all times we should be coming back to this word and saying, “God, help me to remain faithful and consistent in the application of this word in all that I do, because I intend, by Your grace, to fulfill Your purposes. That is my intention.” There is a third thing, and that is that Jesus has revealed to us what God the Father is like, Who He is, and He invites us to love Him. We are told in Hebrews 1:3 that Jesus is the exact representation, that is that He bears the exact imprint of His nature. When Jesus said to Philip, “He who has seen me has seen the Father,” that is exactly what He meant: when you are seeing Me, you are seeing the Father. “I am the way the Father would be as a man.”

Consequently, the one who follows Jesus follows God. The one who does not follow Jesus does not follow God. Please understand; that is probably one of the harshest, rudest, most troubling statements a person can make, because across this world there are literally hundreds of millions, and I would say billions of people who believe they are following God, but they do not follow Jesus. Amongst those millions there are many who are fellow citizens with us.

In the third chapter of John we learn that God sent His Son as the Lamb of God, uniquely anointed with the Holy Spirit to save humanity from the consequences of their sins. But John spells out for us there something of critical importance in two separate ways as you and I seek to live out the Christian life. Humanity is more wedded to their sin than they are interested in escaping either present or eternal consequences. Why? Explaining the bondage of the human soul and heart to sin is not a brief comment! You have to take it on faith. All you have to do is try to talk somebody out of their sinful habits. This is absolutely, overwhelmingly critical. There are a couple of applications that we have to understand flow from this. Here is one of them: The sovereignty of God in salvation. If the first comment I made briefly ago was amongst the rudest and most troubling statements, this one tops it. This statement is what Paul said in Romans 3: how many people are in fact seekers after God? None! That is a horrible thing to say, but that is what the Bible says. Consequently, who will be saved? Only those whom God sovereignly touches with His grace, opens their minds, changes their hearts and draws them to know Jesus Christ.

There are a couple of responses: you can shake your fist and say, “That is not fair!” To which God says, “You are right; that is why it is grace. Because if I was fair what would be the result? Hell.” The other option is to fall on your face and say, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”

That says a lot about the way the world is and the way you and I need to be. John 3:16-19. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* To this we say, Hallelujah! *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in him but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the only Son of God. And this is the judgment. . .”* By the way, whose judgment is this? [It is God’s, not pastor John’s. Pastor John does not like this verse. Pastor John wishes the verse wasn’t here. Pastor John wishes Pastor John could stand up, preach the gospel and persuade millions of people to believe in Jesus. But I can’t do that.] *“...this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.”* How many of you are praying for somebody that they would come to know Jesus Christ? How many have lives that are bound up in bonds of affection and loyalty and close companionship [with someone] and they do not yet know Jesus Christ. How many have hearts that break and tears that flow because you long and desire that they would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ? Pray. Because it is the disposition of the Father that determines the eternal destiny of every soul, and the only access that you and I have to the throne of God is through faith relying on the Holy Spirit, claiming the blood of Christ.

The consequence for those of us who follow Jesus is to recognize that the people in the world around us are enslaved to sin. Because they are, there is another consequence. It means that if we are going to walk with Christ, we are going to walk apart from or separated from the rest of humanity. It is absolutely unavoidable. If the judgment of God is that people are sinners and they love their sin more than they desire salvation, then they are, figuratively speaking, all walking this way. And if you have been saved by grace, you know God, you love the truth and you desire to fulfill and His purposes, it means you are walking this way and they are going that way. Let me guarantee you, you will bump into unpleasant confrontations along the way. Is that a good plan? That is a dumb plan! Surely God could have come up with a better plan. But do you know what? He didn’t. We walk apart from [the rest of] humanity.

To follow Jesus is to follow a God who is sovereign in grace. I have to return to this because it is so difficult for us to walk with it, and we easily misunderstand it. What does it mean to be sovereign in grace? What does it mean to be sovereign? The most spontaneous way we have of responding to that word, I imagine, is to see the king sits upon his throne and he issues decrees (I tried raising my children this way: it didn’t work out very well.). “Ha! Boom! I am the king! Ah, boom. You will do thus and such! Ah, boom, boom, boom.” (It didn’t work out very well – but then I wasn’t God!) What [the Word] say is that He is sovereign in grace. Beloved God is all powerful. Nothing in the end will resist, thwart or prevent Him from the fulfilling of His purposes. The thing that it is essential for us to comprehend is that in this time frame, in the age of grace, God sovereignly rules by grace. What does that mean? To follow Jesus in this age as we are to do is not to follow the way of power nor is it to follow the way of judgment. It is instead to follow the way of kindness and compassion. For God in His goodness extends goodness and asks that we would receive it. That is what you and I are to do. We are to extend the goodness of God regardless of the merit of the person to whom we extend it. That is tough. Have you tried it? You begin to understand why it is we need the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, to offer what is good to the person who spits in our face.

In the fifth chapter we learn therefore that to follow Jesus is to live in complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit. *“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the*

Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise,” and *“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself;”* and *“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”* These comments, this recognition that you and I are to live day by day in complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit, opens a window for our understanding of what is meant, by Paul primarily when he talks about dying to oneself. The one who follows Jesus dies to self-will. The one who follows Jesus puts to death those desires that are contrary to the truth and the righteousness of God. This is called sanctification. The one who follows Jesus continually makes an inventory of their life in order that they would eliminate from their life those things that are distractions, those things that are encumbrances, those things that tie you down and tie you up and make you slow to respond and make you negligent in your attendance upon the Word, that draw you away from times of prayer so that your fellowship with the Holy Spirit is weakened. Why are [those disciplines] so necessary? [It is] because what you and I are called to do is to live in constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and therefore that channel needs to be open and it cannot be cluttered with other things. This morning in my private devotions I read the parable of the soils. First soil: zero [fruit]. Second soil, shallow. Zero. Third soil: good soil full of weeds. How much fruit? Zero. In John’s first letter, chapter 2:15-17 he warns us about being trapped by the world, the flesh and the devil.

It is in John’s Gospel that we hear Jesus say, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger.” Whoever believes in me, He says, will never thirst. It is in John’s Gospel that we hear Jesus say, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will walk in the light of life.” It is in John’s Gospel that we hear Jesus say, “I am the good shepherd; I lay down my life for the sheep.” It is in John’s Gospel that we hear Jesus say, “I am the resurrection and the life.” What is the fruit of this? It is very simple: if you add all of these things up you realize that you and I are being called to an exclusive devotion to Jesus Christ. You and I are being called to love no one and nothing more than we love Jesus Christ. I am not to love my beloved wife more than I love Jesus Christ. I am not to love my children, who are precious to me, more than I love Jesus Christ. If necessary I would break the bond in order to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. Because none of those whom I love upon the face of the earth, even as much as I love my wife, are the source of my life. They are not the source of my wisdom. They are not the source of my inner strength. Only Jesus, only the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus are these things. We enter into an exclusive devotion. He feeds us the bread of life; He quenches our thirst to refresh our souls; He guides and protects us even at the cost of His own life; and He is Himself the guarantee of new life from the dead both now and for eternity.

These are a few of the core teachings from the first eleven chapters of John’s Gospel, those which help to develop a picture in our mind of what it means to follow Jesus. But it is the contents of chapters 12-17, often referred to as the Upper Room Discourses, which give to us the most sustained body of Jesus’ direct, personal teaching. Those chapters take us from Jesus’ triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem to the night of Jesus’ betrayal ending with what is generally known as Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer in chapter 17.

Jesus says this in John 12:23-26,

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serve me, the Father will honor him.”

Jesus said in John 13, He demonstrated, washing of the feet of His disciples. That was the most menial task you could do in ancient Israel. Jesus said we are to wash one another's feet. One of the questions I have for us to ask is, what does that mean? Whose feet am I going to wash, and how?

Jesus gave a new commandment. The commandment was this: we are to love one another. Oh, no. that is not the commandment. Do you know that that is not the commandment? He added a little phrase. Do you know what He added? “The way I have loved you.” Oh. Here it is, John 13:34-35, *“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* Washing one another's feet was the first example of that kind of love.

I have commented before in this room as well as in other settings within the context of this congregation: why is the church of Jesus Christ so powerless in America? We have millions upon millions of professing Christians, and yet the ability we have to influence the general mindset or perception of reality, the values that govern the decision making of the vast majority of our citizens, don't remotely reflect the gospel, doesn't remotely reflect the Bible, is moving continually and rapidly in a more and more pagan and degenerate direction. What is the matter? I think a large part of the matter is that we don't wash each other's feet. We do not find ourselves willing to humiliate ourselves in order to bend low in order to perform small acts of continual kindness that will bless and encourage fellow believers. We hold ourselves aloof, and the way we hold ourselves aloof is most often this: this is my calendar. How much time do I have for the people of God? Very, very little. Consequently the problem is not that we don't necessarily know the right thing to do, we just don't have time. We cry out, “O, we are so busy!” Well, who is responsible for the twenty four hours [of every day]? It is us! But we do not know how to resist the wind of our culture that blows us and we don't know recognize the wind of our culture is designed by the evil one to blow us off course and to keep us so occupied with secondary concerns that we have no time to attend to the primary obligations that are ours before God. So like those rolling tumble weeds, we roll with a great deal of action but are removed from the ground and are dead.

In John 14:15 Jesus said, *“If you love me you will keep my commandments.”* He also said, *“Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the words that you hear are not mine but are the Father's.”* Lastly Jesus said in chapter 15:7-9, *“If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.”*

Beloved, if you want, you could today go to your Father and say, “Father, please help me. I do not want to continue to be trapped in the hectic life of modernity. I do not want to continue to have my life shut away from those around me. I want to begin to experience the power of Your Holy Spirit enabling me to love brothers and sisters in Christ in such a manner that when I read, “wash their feet,” I say, “I got it; I know, and it is good to be faithful in the ways of God!” To follow Jesus is to pray in faith for an abundantly fruitful life of service, a life that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Father who sent Him that you and I would know the love of God.

Heavenly Father, what a great gospel this is! We have barely touched the outer edge, but we thank You. We thank You our Father that the small beginnings we have in our company are magnified by the indwelling presence of your

Holy Spirit and the marvelous freedom we have to open Your word and to be taught by the Holy Spirit out of this word. So by Your grace may we be faithful. We ask this, giving thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. Have you found studying about the end times is often so much more interesting and even exciting than studying and meditating on the cross? Why might this be so?
2. Paul refers to the power of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). What is that power and how does it work?
3. What are some of the things that Jesus has you about the Father? How have these things helped you in your faith-walk?
4. What do you see as the evidence for, and what might be the evidence against the idea that people are enslaved by sin such that they will not let it go? Why is the notion that we are slaves to sin so difficult to accept and act on?
5. How have you experienced the need to “walk” separately from the unsaved?
6. What does it mean to say that God accomplishes His will by grace rather than by power?
7. To live by depending on the Spirit requires that we “put to death” whatever it is we might rely on for wisdom, strength, joy, inner peace, a sense of worthiness and so on. What are some things you have had to “leave behind” in order to depend on the Spirit?
8. What are some contemporary equivalents to foot washing in Jesus' day?
9. Reviewing in your mind what you know of Jesus, what strikes you as most compelling about the way Jesus loved His disciples?
10. Is yours an abundantly fruitful life for God? What could you do to make it more so?