

“Peace and Prayer”
Pastor John Bronson

John 14:27-31

December 30, 2012

Order of Worship for December 30th, 2013, title, “Peace and Prayer”, text, John 14:27-31 (Youth Sunday)

Opening Song:
Invocation: Isaiah 42:1-9

Welcome and announcements
Ministry Moment:

Worship Theme: Praising God for His faithfulness and thanking Him for the gift of peace

Sunday Evening in the Word
5:30-7:00 pm in the Library
(Cancelled until January 6th)

(Please plan to join us then in our continuing study of the Sermon on the Mount)

December 30

Prelude: Laura Finn

Opening Song:
“10,000 Reasons” overhead

Invocation: Isaiah 42:1-9

Welcome and Announcements
Dylan Lundberg and Samantha Ross

Preparing the Heart in Song:
“Angels We Have Heard on High” Song # 278
“Revelation Song” overhead
“How He Loves Us” overhead

Offering and Offertory
Jason Nyberg and Laura Finn

Special Music “What Child is This?” by Tara Wixom

Message: “Peace and Prayer” John 14:27-31
Pastor John Bronson

Response to the Word:
“The Stand” overhead

Parting Word of Grace Brody Spon

Sunday Evening in the Word:
Cancelled until January 6 for Christmas Season

“The Prayer Closet”

December 30, 2012

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”
(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

Russell and Sharla Weisner: the Spirit will draw their Hindu neighbors to study the Word; the Lord will ensure Safety for our; the Father will bring unity as we set up the constitution and structure the ministry of the international church; the Lord will bless the people attending the new Bible studies that have started as a result of the testimonies of three young men who were attacked for their faith

President Obama: the Lord will instill a spirit of humility and righteousness in his heart; the Spirit will subdue the passions of the flesh in him and his family; God will give them the gift of Christ centered peace

The Church leadership Team: the Lord will draw the new and existing members of the boards of elders, deacons, deaconesses, trustees and the Oroville Christian School board into oneness of heart and mind for the Lord’s glory through the ministries and activities of the congregation

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: SFC Matthew Basner, Army (son of Randy and Lou): that they find a local church to call home, for health for Sara and the twins and to safely deliver in June, for Kelsie as she struggles in school, for the family’s spiritual growth as they prepare to become a family of six

Young Adult of the Week: Michael Giordano at UCLA (son of Tim and Laura): that school go well next semester with a heavy course load, that his application for Resident Assistant be accepted, for God’s guidance, strength and direction.

**Please pray for the health and recovery of our church family: Carol Bernerd, Bob Boettcher, Ellen McNabb, Randy Bowen, Volker Ladendorf, LaVerne Lee, Dick & Jane Miller, Phil Peterson
(please call the office to request updates to this list)**

Some weeks ago we thought through the implications of Jesus’ use of the word [orphan] – if you will open your Bibles to John 14:18 – Jesus made this comment about us: he said that [we] are “orphans.” Jesus describes His disciples with that term. The issue with this is one of identity. Who are we; who am I? How do I understand myself as I step out into the world around me and I begin to engage with people? What is my identity? Explaining more fully the nature and results of the gospel in our lives the Apostle Paul later on would call us “the adopted children of God.” Again, he is speaking of our identity. When we are saved Jesus Christ is the new source of our identity.

How does a child develop their identity? They learn it from their family, good or bad makes no difference, that is where they gain it. Those are the people who are around them and inform them as to what it means to be a man, what it means to be a woman, what it means to be in a family life together, what it means to approach the issue of life, take them up, make decisions and resolutions and move forward. So we gain our identity. What is our taste, what do we enjoy, what do we call beautiful, what do we call ugly: all of these things are first shaped in us and form our identity through our family. What about when we become Christians? Our identity in Christ is going to be learned from, drawn from the truths, the teaching the traditions of the faith taught by the Spirit and practiced and exemplified by the church as we walk in the obedience of love. That is the intention of God. When you read the New Testament you will never find a situation in which it is not anticipated that every believer is firmly embedded in the life of a local church and this is part of the reason why. It is not sufficient for us to say, “I am saved by Jesus.” That is wonderful, but it is not sufficient. It is not sufficient because unless a person deliberately chooses to expose themselves to, to become involved with and integrated with a body of believers they will not learn the body of practices, traditions and truths by which they will be changed into the model or the picture or image of Christ. We have in the world around us thousands and hundreds of thousands of people who say, “I am a Christian, I am saved,” and that is the whole of their testimony. Happy indeed is the child when faith and family agree, when that which is learned in the church is also practiced and taught in the home. Great indeed are the blessings when one thing reinforces the other and one song is sung in all situations, giving praise to the holy God: of course!

In the last message that I presented in looking at the Gospel of John, we looked at Jesus’ statement in John 14:23. *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.”* In that message I likened “keep my word” with having something as a keepsake. Many of us have keepsakes. Recently as most of you know Nini and I had the opportunity to go to London and also to Sweden. When we came back from there we brought things that remind us of the wonderful time we had visiting our son and daughter-in-law and the world’s most beautiful baby – in case you’re not certain about that talk to us after the service. Keepsakes: we look at these things and they remind us of all of that which we experienced and received and in which we were glad and rejoiced when we had the opportunity to be with my son and his wife and the world’s most beautiful baby. That is a keepsake. So too, then, [is] the Word of God. Notice again what is said; the connection that Jesus is making between loving Him and keeping His words (and it is a plural: words). The Greek term translated “keep” includes the ideas of observe, obey, pay attention to or keep under guard.

To that statement we would add John 14:24 and 26. This will bring our thinking into focus as we move forward [in the study of John]. In John 14:24, Jesus says, *“Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.”* That is not a theoretical statement. That is not a doctrinal statement per se. That is an existential statement, it is a judgment statement. All any of us need to do to get inside of that statement is to say to ourselves two things: do I know the word, do I keep it? The way to find out is to see if you can remember any of it. Then ask yourself, “Of that portion of the Word which I remember, what in the past week have I done that represents that portion of the Word?” If you have to say, “Nothing”, then this past week you did not love God. We like to think of love as primarily an emotion, an emotion of positive regard, something like, “I like Jesus. I think the story of Jesus is a wonderful story. I wish everybody liked Jesus as much as I like Jesus.” That is good, but useless, because what Jesus

says is, “If you like me, be like me.” What Jesus says is, “If you like me, I have given you lots of instruction: how’s it going?” Christianity is a very practical religion. God has very clear and specific expectation of those who say, “I am saved by the blood of Christ.”

In this we need help, as I am sure all of us in this room recognize. It is good, then, to move from verse 24 right on to v. 26 I John 14. *“Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.”* Here the emphasis falls on the specific things that Jesus said and taught – that is why we are spending all this time in the Gospel of John. We are to pay attention to the words that Jesus spoke. That leads us to verse 26. *“The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* Ah ha! Here is a reason to begin your day in prayer: “Lord, good morning. Thank you for a safe night’s rest. Thank you for the prospect of this day. Help me to remember all that I have learned so that I can walk faithfully through all that I do.” That would be a good way to start the day.

The bottom line is that if the Holy Spirit has been given to us that we might know and remember, then I think we should understand that Jesus wants us to live by the word that He spoke, and that would either be directly as recorded in the Gospels or as in application with the epistles.

That is the summary of where we were a month ago. Today we have a message which I have entitled, “Peace and Prayer”, which is drawn from the teaching of John 14:27-31. Follow as I read these verses. Jesus is in the midst of His Upper Room discourses. This is the last opportunity that He has to speak with His disciples before He is going to be arrested when they go off to the Garden of Gethsemane and then He will be crucified.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.”

In an earlier message we saw that the heart of the Gospel is the unfailing love of the Son for the Father. We tend to think that the gospel is, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Campus Crusade has done a wonderful job of putting that firmly in our minds. But it is not the primary step. The first step, the foundation of it all is the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity forever. The gospel as you and I receive it is an outflow of the Son’s love for His Father. Jesus was willing to die on the Cross so as to glorify His heavenly Father: that is His intention. He glorifies the Father by giving His life to save from damnation those who were lost in sin and whom the Father calls and chooses. In this what Jesus is doing is demonstrating the Father’s own love. He makes clear to us the character and purpose of His Father. The anticipation in that is that we will fall down in adoration and praise and thanksgiving, saying “Great indeed is a God of such great and perfect love that reaches to you and to me.”

What Jesus says here, then, knowing that, He says to His disciples that if they loved Him they would have rejoiced to know that He is going to leave the world and going to be with the Father. He says that the reason for this is that, “the Father is greater than I am.” Jesus’ words at this point bring together a number of truths that we know but have a hard time believing. Remember that believing something is to know it is true and then organize your life on the basis of that truth. So, as the message is going to be continually pointing us to, if we believe that God answers prayer, then we should organize our lives so we pray. It is as simple as that. If we believe that Jesus wants us to live according to His word, then we organize our lives so we have opportunity to read and know the Word:

simple. If we believe that Jesus wants us to live according to His word and then we proceed not to organize our lives, then we actually don't believe it, because it has not affected our will or reshaped our desires.

So we begin at this point in coming to grips with this passage, John 14, by looking at the peace which Christ gives. Notice that when He speaks about this He stresses that He does not give peace the way the world gives peace. He urges His disciples not to be afraid. We need to put this in its proper context. This is the second time that Jesus has told His men not to be troubled, and both times it is for the same reason. They are troubled because He has said, “I am leaving, and you cannot go where I am going.” Recognize that in the Upper Room at this point the men do not yet know that Jesus is going to be crucified. They do not yet realize that Judas will be the one to betray Him. And they do not yet realize that Judas is going to do it that night. But it is dawning on them that a fundamental change is about to occur. Shadows of danger are dimming the light of joy, and undermining any sense of peace.

The narrative doesn't say this, but if you step into the situation I think it is pretty obvious that the disciples know that though they are in danger, it is really Jesus who is in trouble. Typically the authorities care little for the followers: it is the leader that they want. You will notice that we went after Bin Laden; all the rest of them were secondary. If you get the man at the top you have severely wounded the organization. How troubled would they [have been on account of Jesus being] in trouble? It is good for us, and I appreciated one of the songs this morning, to remind ourselves what it must have been like to be with Jesus. What kind of a person was He? He was uncommonly good. He was unstinting in His kindness. He was often kind to the point of exhaustion on His own part. He was unfailing in His patience, and also in His wisdom and His perseverance. He had done remarkable things, and yet He was incredibly humble. He was obviously powerful, but He was also gentle. He had opened these men's lives to hope. Hope is more precious the more it is needed. These men lived in a situation in which there was huge need for hope. Right now I have a daughter-in-law and a grand-daughter who are in Haiti. They are down there to assist people who have gone deaf because of one of the multiple diseases that are in Haiti. My daughter-in-law made this observation. Haiti seems to her like Eden, a place of incredible beauty, and yet the evidence of corrupting sin strikes the eye: piles of garbage, people walking aimlessly about. You must know that Haiti is the center of Voodoo religion. The center of witchcraft and idolatry and it is deep in corruption. The State Department has asked Americans not to go there because the Haitian government is incapable of protecting people from criminality. The disciples live in a world in which they are ruled over by immoral pagans, by a government that oppresses them with rapacious taxation, and which offers them almost no protection. The men know that Jesus is the Messiah. They fully expect that the Messiah is going to be a world ruler, and that the purpose of this Messiah is to establish a godly government over the nations. [But] Jesus says, “I am going away,” and nothing has changed. The one thing they know is that Jesus is in trouble, so hope is crumbling.

Jesus makes a contrast between His peace and the peace of the world. We can be pretty sure that Jesus was aware of the sort of fears and uncertainties that would be going through the disciples' minds. He says that there are two kinds of peace and they are given in two different ways. The world gives us peace: how does it do that. What He says is that the world's peace is both brief and uncertain. At every level of life troubles are always close at hand. Perhaps no better measure of this can be found than in the amount of wealth people and nations spend for security. Whether we think of expenditures for military preparedness or all the forms of insurance by which we hope to protect ourselves and gain security against the uncertainties of the future, the investment we make is staggering. But does it work? Humanity continues to live in fear, and there is an underlying anxiety regarding the potential for great loss and disturbance in life. How many know that WWI was fought to end all wars? WWII was fought to make the world safe for democracy. [With] the collapse of communism a number of interesting people said, “That is the end of history, because from now on there will be peace and prosperity and the continual spread of liberal institutions and democratic life and all is now going to be well.” Just how well is it beloved? Now we are faced with Islamic terrorism and financial ruin. Are you buying gold? I hope you can eat it!

The world’s peace is circumstantial. The world’s peace only reaches the heart from the outside. Ironically the more dependent [we are] on those circumstances the more uncertain we will be regarding our peace. We are fragile creatures. We know we live in a dangerous world, not least because we know there is much inside of ourselves that we never want anybody to find.

Characteristically human beings love themselves before all others. We are jealous for our own well-being. To a disturbing degree our love for others rarely reaches further than the degree to which we see our own well-being wrapped up in theirs. This is the reality to which Jesus speaks in John 15:13. This is what Jesus says: *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down [their own precious life] his own life for his friends.”* “I am willing to surrender all of my securities, all of my hopes, all of my dreams for you.” Jesus says, that is the fullest measure of love. We saw that recently in some remarkable ways when the teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School put themselves between the gunmen and the children. I believe God notes those things, and so should we. We do not like to think of ourselves as being selfish in this manner, but it is true. Consequently the bonds of loyalty and trust remain problematic and therefore also the peace we gain on the worldly plain.

By contrast the peace which Jesus has, “My peace” is what He says; He doesn’t say, “The world gives you peace and I can give you peace.” What He says is, “My peace...” You have to ask that question, “What does He mean by “My peace”? Is He going to give you some of His peace? Precisely so; that is exactly what He is going to do. The peace which Jesus has and which He gives: He does not explicitly say this but we can infer this as we think about what Jesus has said in all of the earlier dialogues. The peace which Jesus has is the peace which He has in His love for the Father. It is a peace which reflects the certainty of the Father’s love for Him. It is out of that certainty that Jesus is able to have the inner moral strength to surrender His life on behalf of those who don’t deserve such a thing, which is us: we need it but we don’t deserve it. This is not a circumstantial peace. This is a peace rooted in the very character of God the Father who loves God the Son and the Son reciprocates that love. This is the love into which you and I are called to participate, to receive, and to duplicate through the power of the Spirit. So Jesus says to them, *“Let not your hearts be troubled nor be afraid.”* Why? Because, this is not peace that depends on circumstances. It is rooted in our faith in God. The implication of His statement is that it is a choice. We can choose whether or not to be afraid. In the context Jesus is addressing the fear and the trouble arising from the fact in the hearts and minds of His disciples that He is leaving them, the fear that He earlier addressed when assuring them they would not be left as orphans with no one to keep and to protect and to guide them. Jesus says that if you loved Me you would not be troubled and fearful, but rather that you would rejoice because I am going to the Father and the Father is greater than I am. Let’s look at that.

This is the kind of statement that is a perfectly obvious truth that still knocks the wind out of you! It is like the person whom you love profoundly and is dying and they turn to you and say, “Knock it off. What are you being all sad about? Don’t you realize that I am going to heaven and be with the Lord Jesus Christ and it is going to be well with me?” So how do we respond to that? “Yes, but what about me? What about my heart break, what about my love, what about the silences that are going to fill my ears?” We are quite right to cry out in protest: “No! I am glad you are going to go to heaven, but I am sad that I am going to be left behind.” This is perfectly appropriate.

But remember what Jesus has already told the disciples. The death of Jesus is no common event. Notice again what Jesus said in verse 26, *“You heard me say to you that I am going away – then what comes after that? – “...and I will come again.”* Our thoughts go back to John 14:19, *“Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”* The key here is Jesus’ affirmation that the Father is greater than He is. The point of the statement is that any and every appearance of weakness or loss needs to be held in suspension, for Jesus is actually going to be with the Father, and the Father is the source of all, He is the ruler of all, He is perfect in wisdom and He is surely bringing things to their proper and true end. If you look down at verse 31 Jesus reminds us that in all that He does

He is obeying the Father’s commands, which is a guarantee that indeed the Father will love Him, because He keeps the Father’s commands. So to be afraid is to either doubt that the Father will back up Jesus’ statements, implying that somehow Jesus was off the mark in what He said, or that the Father is not able to follow up on His promises, which is to say that He is weak.

We may wonder at Jesus’ comment that the Father is greater than He is. Doesn’t that contradict our belief in the Trinity? The Trinity, one God of three Persons in complete equality, so much so that to speak of one is to speak equally of the other: that is the doctrine of the Trinity. It would be [a contradiction] if Jesus was speaking of Himself as the Son of God here, but in fact He is not speaking of Himself as the Son of God; He is speaking of Himself as our Savior. As our Savior He is the Lamb of God and the Son of Man. He necessarily is truly and fully [has] a human nature like ours. He is also our elder brother, the second Adam. Jesus in these words is speaking as the model of the faith that you and are to emulate and try to have. As the Father is greater than Jesus, the Father is also greater than we are. As Jesus can have absolute faith in the Father, so you and I can have absolute faith in the Father. Jesus’ words to Mary Magdalene when He meets her just outside the tomb after His resurrection state this exactly. In John 20:16-17 this is what we are told: *“She turned to him and said to him in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means Teacher) Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”* It is an exact parallel and we are to live out our lives in the pursuit of that exact parallel in the relationship between us and the Father as between Jesus and the Father.

So why should we rejoice at Jesus’ departure? There are three reasons that are given to us. First we rejoice for Jesus’ own sake. When Jesus came out of heaven and down to earth we are told explicitly He left His privileges behind, He left his glory behind, He left His comfort and safety behind and He subjected Himself to all of the troubles and the sorrows and the difficulties that are your and my portion. Of course we should be glad He goes back up home! If we love Him we rejoice in [what is good for Him]. I think sometimes we only think of Jesus in terms of what He gives us, not in terms of who He is. If we thought more about who He is and how our sins wound His heart we might sin less.

Secondly, we rejoice in Jesus’ departure for our sake. When Jesus goes to the Father He sends the Spirit. The Spirit comes as our Comforter, our teacher and our guide. Already Jesus has spoken to His men of the Spirit as the one who will help them. It is the presence of the Spirit which assures them that they are not orphans but they are part of the family of God. You wonder if those guys in the room [the disciples], did they remember anything that Jesus had said to them? If you want proof of patience just look at the patience that Jesus had in putting up with the twelve guys [of whom] the Spirit said these are they guys You are going to have to live with! Did you ever think about that?

Thirdly we rejoice in Jesus’ departure because Jesus goes to the Father as our friend and our Savior and our advocate. This thought would scarcely have entered the minds of the men in the upper room, but as we contemplate the scene and rehearse the conversation between Jesus and the disciples the thought should come forward powerfully: when Jesus goes to be in heaven with the Father, Hebrews 9:24 tells us, *“...Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God...”* – and why is He in the presence of God? [it is] for us; that is exactly what it says. Hebrews 7:25 had already said, *“...he always lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him.”* Every time I approach the Father in the name of Jesus I have absolute certainty through the written word of God that Jesus is standing in the presence of the Father saying, “Here he comes, it’s John again.” And may I say that if my understanding of scripture is correct, the more often John comes, the more pleased the Father is!

In I John 2:1 John writes, *“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”* Lastly in Psalm 73:25 – there is a song [based on this and I am] sorry we didn’t sing it, “Whom have I in Heaven”. What is the answer? Whom have I in heaven? It is Jesus. That is who is in heaven for us. So should the disciples have been glad when they knew that Jesus was going to go back to the Father? Most assuredly, of course they should have been.

There is a little more [here]: if I understand the words of Romans 8:26-27 correctly, the Spirit sent by Jesus not only communicates our prayers to the throne of grace, He also communicates the Father’s will and wisdom to our hearts, shaping our prayers so that they reflect the mind of God. I would encourage you to take that couple of verses and memorize them. *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”* So the Spirit and Jesus intercede on our behalf together.

What we are looking at here is not a discussion of the power of God. Rather the issue that is actually in front of us is the issue of communication, the meeting of minds, as it were, between Jesus and the Father and us. Remember that we are talking about peace, and peace is experienced as we are persuaded of the unfailing love of God for us, and the reciprocation of love by us for the Father. In I Corinthians 2:16 Paul speaks directly to this issue: *“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”* So how many can say “Amen”? The statement is that as I have come to the Father in prayer, as I have waited upon Him in the Spirit, as I have let the Spirit run through my memory the Word of God which has been placed in my heart, my understanding can come to the place where I can say, “I have the mind of Christ.” That is the affirmation which we receive through the apostle Paul. Clearly that is the fruit of the active ministry of the Holy Spirit pressing home the Word of God to our understanding, and altering our will and desires so that we agree with God. When the disciples and Jesus were in the boat on the Sea of Galilee and a great wind storm arose such that even the seasoned sailors among the disciples feared they would capsize and drown, they wakened the sleeping Jesus in panic. “We’re going to die!” That is what I think they were doing. Notice Jesus’ response. Listen to this response very carefully: *“Why are you afraid, O you of little faith.’ Then He rose and rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, ‘What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?’”* Understandably we tend to focus on Jesus as the One Who stilled the storm. However, when Jesus asks and comments on their little faith, the issue is not whether or not they have faith in Jesus. It is not whether or not Jesus has the power to still the storm. They don’t expect Jesus to stand up and say, “Whoa, stop!” That wasn’t the issue at all. Jesus’ response is that they don’t have enough faith in the Father to pray. They don’t think God will listen to them. Beloved, the verse does not say that Jesus stilled the storm. Who do you think stilled that storm? It was the Father, of course! This is a perfect demonstration of the love relationship between Jesus, Who does what the Father commands Him, and therefore He knows that the Father hears Him when He prays and therefore Jesus prays. This is not a demonstration of the independent power of Jesus Christ to command the waves. This is a demonstration of the power of prayer to connect Jesus with the Father, demonstrating the profound reality of love between them, and it is there for us. The problem in the boat was a breakdown in communication between the Father and the men.

Now here is my tacky little statement: most men in the hearing of my voice will say something like, “O, it’s just a communications problem. No big deal.” Most women in the hearing of my voice would lean forward and say, “O a communications problem. I hear that. Tell me about it. How can we get it solved?” That is catty, but this is not: women are far more likely to pray than men are. They just are. This is, of course, a disastrous mistake. Consider again for a moment what is before us. What does God put in place in order to overcome the breakdown in communications between us and Him? First the Spirit intercedes for us and shapes our prayers according to the Father’s will so that we can have the mind of Christ. That is the astonishing assertion that Paul makes in I Corinthians 2:16, that we have the mind of Christ. In the context of I Corinthians 2, this is the direct result of the

believer having received the Spirit of God. I Corinthians 2:12, *“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”* That is simply another way of saying what Jesus had already said in John 14:26, *“The Spirit will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* Secondly Jesus as it were stands in the presence of the Father and intercedes for us, He speaks to the Father on our behalf. The intent is not that the Spirit and Jesus would speak to the Father instead of us, but for us and with us men!

Did you ever notice that it is hard to pray? Did you ever wonder about that? What can be more simple, straightforward and reasonable than praying to our heavenly Father? Yet what aspect of the spiritual life is more often neglected or abused? Prayer, beloved, is at the heart of a living faith, and is therefore the focal point of spiritual warfare. Don't talk to me about demons in control of the city: talk to me about what spirit is in control of your heart, your mind and your tongue. The bottom line here is that the disciples in the boat did not have enough faith to pray to the Father. The question is always, do we?

Please pray with me: Father, as we have seen in these words of Jesus You have gone to extraordinary lengths to reestablish on unshakeable foundations the communication between us as Your children and You as our Father. You have made it abundantly clear that You love us. You want us to come into Your presence, to seek Your face, to lay out our hearts and our minds and our souls and talk to You. Grant, our Father, that as we walk into the year to come, we shall be those who are often in Your presence and who feed their minds on Your Word, that our hearts will cleave to You in love and we shall be a people of prayer. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. What makes people hesitant to openly state their identity as adopted children of God?
2. What sorts of things trouble you? Is there any person that if they were in trouble it would trouble you as well?
3. What are the top three to five things which if you could change them you would have peace and happiness in life?
4. Would you agree that being troubled or afraid is a choice?
5. Do you trust or rely on God, and if so, for what? For what sorts of things do you find it hard to trust in God?
6. What were the three reasons given in the message for rejoicing that Jesus goes to the Father?
7. Have you ever wondered if you really did or could know the mind of God regarding something of concern to you? What make it hard to think this could be possible?
8. Do you see prayer as a means for “gaining the mind of Christ”? Does it help to see this if we remember that part of the Spirit’s work is to bring to our remembrance the words of Jesus as well as to guide us into the truth? (see Romans 8:26-27, I Cor. 2:12 and John 14:26)
9. Have you sensed or experienced the Spirit praying with and through you to the Father?
10. Prayer is at the heart of spiritual warfare. If we can be kept from praying our faith will diminish and our testimony. How can we make prayer a larger and more significant part of our lives?