

Daily Devotions Monday 22nd June

John 16 vs 1-11 (esp 5,7)

Jesus, God in flesh, shows great understanding of his beloved but human apostles. At the same time he was totally practical and truthful about their futures.

The Greek word translated to 'go astray' means 'faced with an obstacle' which relates to comes next. Saul, on behalf of the High Priest, was persecuting and excommunicating Christian Jews thinking that he was defending his traditional Jewish God!

Jesus knows what is coming for the apostles and wants to warn them but also to prepare them for his fate on the cross.

Jesus says, "None of you ask me, 'Where are you going?'" This at first seems a contradiction because in 13v36 Peter asks him where he is going, as does Thomas in 14v5.

Jesus is drawing attention to the motives of their thinking. In Peter's and Thomas's questions their main concern was, 'You are leaving us! Why and what will become of us'. They weren't that interested in where Jesus was actually going!

A Father after reading his son a bedtime story might say, 'Night night, I've got to go now'. The boy might ask, 'Where are you going?' He's not that bothered where he is going as much as he is that he is leaving!! Like the boy at bedtime, as his Dad is about to go downstairs, the apostles are filled with grief. And like the Dad who says, 'Don't worry I'll be here when you wake up' in order to reassure his son, Jesus promises that his presence will return in the form of the Holy Spirit once he has died, risen, (his mission) and returned to heaven.

Despite having been with Jesus 3 years the apostles could be forgiven for thinking selfishly and not seeing the mind blowing mission that Jesus had in dying to forgive the sins of the people of the world.

We have the whole picture and God's full revelation of his saving work in the Bible.

Are we like the apostles still thinking of self despite our knowledge? Are our prayers centred on the big picture or the self centred minutiae of our own lives?

Our God is an awesome God but which do you think he'd like to hear? 100 million requests for the opening of hearts to receive the gospel or 100 million requests for parking spaces?

Daily devotions Tuesday 23rd June 2020

John 16 vs 1-11 (esp 8-11)

Jesus asks us to consider the work of the Holy Spirit in reference to sin, righteousness and judgement.

- Sin

We might think of sin as lying, stealing, cheating, hating, greed, etc etc but Jesus says it's more about not believing in him! (v9). No matter how hard people try to be good and avoid what we traditionally think of as sin, Jesus is saying here, as he does elsewhere, that sin is not believing the truth about Jesus. He tells us that the Spirit's work is to convict people of that lack of belief in him.

- Righteousness

Jesus talks about going to the Father (God in heaven). When we view ourselves in the light of a perfect sovereign Holy God we realise our righteousness is totally lacking. In our story on Sunday, Mephibosheth realised this when he said, 'What is your servant that you should notice a dead dog like me?' The Spirit's work is to get us to that same position of humility where we have no self righteousness worthy of God except that which Christ gives us.

- Judgement

On the cross Christ won a victory over sin. God's wrath on sin was satisfied through the ultimate sacrifice of his Son! Unlike Satan, who persists in his pride, if we bow to this truth about Jesus we stand forgiven. Satan, the unrepentant author of all sin remains condemned. The Spirit has not completed his work in us unless we are brought to a healthy fear of judgement if we remain outside of Christ.

Whilst we dwell on the comforting and guiding aspects of the Holy Spirit, let's not forget that these 3 that Jesus speaks of are about how we came to him in the first place. Pray to the Spirit to continue this work especially in the hearts of those who we love who remain in darkness.

Daily devotions Wednesday 24th June

John 16 vs 1-15 (esp 12-15)

Jesus speaks of the next role of the Holy Spirit. We read yesterday how he convicts the world about sin, righteousness and judgement. Now he tells us that he will guide us into truth.

We will all have heard someone say, 'the Spirit told me', or 'God told me'. usually to do something or say something. But then we find that whatever it was wasn't in line with the truth we know from God's word. God is incapable of telling a lie whether it is the Father, the Son or the Spirit. In addition to this, whatever the Holy Spirit guides us into will glorify God (v14). It is safe to say that if anything happens under the guise of being from the Holy Spirit does not bring glory to God, then it is a masquerade.

We are told the Spirit will guide us into truth. This truth is what he hears from Jesus and the Father. He works in unity with them and never independently from them.

We have the Holy Spirit to guide us into a true understanding of scripture. We often pray for this promise to be honoured at the start of our Bible studies. We have scripture and the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about Jesus to us. What is written down is what the Holy Spirit revealed about Jesus to those who wrote it.

Jesus, however, is also speaking directly to the apostles here. When he says, 'He will tell you what is yet to come' (v13), he means that the Spirit will guide the apostles in recording the events and ministry of Jesus's life.

Jesus is launching the New Testament here in this upper room. This is borne out in 2 Peter 1 v 21, 'For the prophecy (scripture) never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

We can be sure that scripture is the truth as God intended us to receive it!

Jesus says of the Spirit, 'He will glorify me...' The Holy Spirit in us continues to want to glorify Jesus through us. How much do we glorify him in our work life, family life, Church life and leisure time?

Daily Devotions Thursday 25th June

John 16 vs 16-23 (esp 19-32)

As I am only too aware, the pain of childbirth is extreme and produces much anguish. He He. I can hear all the mums shouting at me, "He hasn't got a clue!".

I was with Lynda during our three birth experiences and was praising God that I had been born a male! But the analogy Jesus uses is perfect because the outcome makes the suffering so worthwhile. For me the joy was more intense than any I'd felt up to then or since and I only watched the suffering!

Yet again Jesus tries to explain what he'd said in v16 and also previously in chapter 14 v 2&3 and v 9, then again in v 28. Jesus wanted to help with their lack of understanding! [v 19]

Jesus follows with two great promises for the days ahead.

'Your grief will turn to joy' [v 20] He is referring to his death and the ensuing grief that is always felt when someone who is loved dies! While the world rejoiced at the death of someone who threatened to disrupt their sinful ways, the apostles would grieve the loss of a dear friend.

They never fully grasped the second promise until Jesus appeared to them in the room with locked doors after his resurrection [chapter 20 v19] 'I will see you again', is what he said. [v 22] They should have known that whatever Jesus promises, he delivers! This promise is for us too. Jesus says to us 'I will see you again'. And he says we will rejoice forever [v 22]. This will happen in heaven [Rev Chapter 21 v2-3].

What great comfort here too for those of us who lose loved ones to death in Christ. Picture them saying to us, 'I will see you again' as they depart from earth. And then when we do see them again 'our grief will turn to joy'.

Daily Devotions Friday 26th June

John 16 vs 23-28

Imagine the awesome, majestic God in heaven as we pictured him in the study on Ezekiel. Imagine him listening to our prayers. I wonder what he thinks when we add at the end of our prayers the words, 'In Jesus's name we ask it!'

To God we are asking in the name of his beloved Son who is the only reason we can approach God in the first place! An audience with God comes at a great cost!

Up until now no-one had asked God for anything in Jesus's name because he hadn't yet come into the world. Now he was about to leave it. His death would do away with the need to pray via priests. Remember the curtain to the Holy of Holies was torn signifying our access directly to God.

We sing, 'There is power in the name of Jesus'. It's true. If we were an employee at Buckingham Palace and went to a local shop for something and added the words, 'It's for the Queen', can you imagine the importance the request had just taken on?!

Verse 27 is surely the basis of our faith. God loves us because of our love and belief in Jesus. And what loving father would give his children a snake if he asked for a fish or a stone if he asked for bread? (Mat 7v9) He loves and cares for us and wants what is best for us according to his wisdom.

We must guard against thinking that, 'in Jesus's name' somehow imparts magical power to our prayers. It is a recognition that it is only because of Jesus that we are able to come to God. In his name also means according to his will.

We are told to bring everything to God in prayer but surely God delights most in those prayers that are tuned into his will as revealed through scripture.

Let's pray according to Jesus's agenda, purpose and will. Let's pray for things that will honour him. Our usual shopping lists will be transformed!