

The Father

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[0 : 00] So we're in John chapter 14 and we find there some, we'll look at some of, the many words of teaching and grace and comfort that Jesus speaks to his worried disciples as he prepares for what he has to go through.

And for where he has to go. But I want to say just as we get into thinking about what Jesus speaks to his disciples, I want to just think for a little minute about something that concerns us all.

I think, I think it concerns us all. And that is this question. What does God have in store for me? What does God have in store for you? You've probably thought that at some point.

And that question can be just a normal one that we ask in the course of any day, but it can also be the source of a lot of angst for us.

I think, what does God have for me? What am I supposed to be doing? Who am I supposed to be? And the reason that we experience that question with a feeling of angst is there's a couple of things I think sometimes that can give us a bit of bother with that question.

[1 : 25] And there are these two things. The first is that we don't know what God's will is for our life. So that causes us a lot of problems. Well, we think, well, God is apparently my loving father, but the future is really unclear to me.

That's hard. And the second problem that we can face when we encounter that question is that we maybe feel like we know God's will for our lives, but we don't like it.

Simply, the providence is the circumstances, the situations that we find ourselves in, or we've got ourselves in, turn out bad. And that's really hard also.

And then we start to say, well, if this is the providence of God for my life, if this is what my father has for me, then I don't know much about my father. I don't know who he is.

I don't know why he would treat me in this kind of way. So to greater or lesser extent, and at different times, I think we ask these kinds of questions, or at least you know somebody who does.

[2 : 31] Now, I mentioned that just as we're starting, because I think this passage, as Jesus speaks to his worried disciples, brings answer and help to that kind of question.

These are the kinds of things that we end up dealing with, as Jesus, through this short passage, speaks to and reassures and gives guidance to his followers.

And so what it does in the situation where we find ourselves with a lack of clarity about the future, or a sense of not liking what the providences of God are, we find that this passage gives clarity to who we are as God's people and what he wants for us.

And it also magnifies our calling as God's people. Because what we find in this passage is Jesus speaks to his followers, and as we apply it to ourselves, is the great and the high calling that his followers have.

So we're going to bring this out a little bit as we look through the text. So we start off in the passage, and I think you were looking at last week, the questions that the disciples ask as they start to hear Jesus talking about moving on and going away.

[3 : 52] And they have a great sense of fear of not knowing what's going to happen. So we start with these worried people, but towards the end of the passage we get this great sense of Jesus giving a great sense of clarity, out of purpose.

And we get there by a series of stages, if you like. So there's just a few links that I want to make, almost like a kind of narrative process that we go through in this passage, from these nervous and worried disciples through to the message of Jesus, which brings such clarity and such purpose.

We're going to trace those few links. Just now, the first one is just to go back to that sense of the disciples with all their fears and all of the uncertainty and all of the unknowing.

Now, this is, remember, in the context, if I go back into chapter 13, and Jesus says in verse 33, little children, yet a little while I'm with you, you'll seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I'm going, you cannot come.

So Jesus is giving them preparation for the fact that he has to move forward in his ministry and in his calling at this point. So this sparks some consternation amongst the disciples.

[5 : 13] And there was a question at the start of chapter 14 last week from Thomas, verse 5, Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?

And of course, Jesus answered that great question by saying, I'm the way. I'm the way. But our passage today picks up that same element of uncertainty and fear, and this time, it's Philip.

So we start off with a question. After Jesus has said in verse 7, he's been speaking about the fact that he's the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me. So that's the kind of initial link.

Through Jesus is the way to the Father. But then Philip says, in verse 8, Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it's enough for us.

Show us the Father. Now, that's a great question. That's a great request. In many ways, that's a timeless request. What's Philip asking there?

[6 : 20] Philip is somebody who seeks God. He wants to know God. But he's somebody who trusts Jesus and is learning to trust Jesus.

But even at this critical point where Jesus is, if you like, provoking this sense of uncertainty, because he's trying to move the disciples on in their understanding of what's got to happen next, Philip, if you like, goes back to the core of what he's seeking and he says, Jesus, just show us the Father.

And then, if you like, we'll be at rest. In that experience, in some way he's saying to Jesus, can you just give us a picture of God, a picture of the Father?

There we will be at peace. That will be, he says, enough for us. There we will be satisfied. So even in that phrase there, you see something about what Philip understands his great purpose or his great desire.

And it's a noble desire, isn't it? He wants to know, to really know and to see and experience God the Father. And this is something that has been the desire of so many.

[7 : 35] So we go back to, if I can just flick back very briefly into the Old Testament, in Exodus chapter 33. In verse 18 we read these words.

And the Lord said to Moses, this very thing that you've spoken, I will do for you, for you found favour in my sight, and I know you by name. And Moses said, please show me your glory. Show me your glory. Let me see you.

Isn't that the great desire of people to know and to see God? We can't see God, but we want to see God.

So Philip says, just show us the Father. Now of course, in this uncertainty and in this request, what Jesus does is, you can sense maybe disappointment, but he doesn't reject the disciples. He simply moves them on in their understanding.

So he goes on to say to Philip, have I been with you so long and you still don't know me? So Philip asks about the Father and Jesus says, you don't know me.

[8 : 52] And of course, he goes on to make this great link, this great connection that they need to fully understand that to see him is to see God, to see the Father, to see the incarnation of God.

He wants to lift up their understanding to the full point where they can see the full sense of who Jesus is and have assurance of that, because that's what they need to know in their uncertainty and in their fear as they face the future.

That's what they need to know in their time and space. They need to be assured that to see Jesus is to have this great sense of knowing God and having this great assurance of the presence of God with them.

And moving them on in this way, we do, as I said, we get a sense of Jesus's, is it disappointment, is it frustration? In any case, he loves them so much that he goes on to explain to them in this wonderful way his deity.

And so it's a great passage also because of the way it fills us with a sense of the person of Jesus, the deity of Jesus and the interconnectedness, Father, Son and Spirit, of course, working together in the great purposes of salvation.

[10:15] Now also, you see, notice the wording, notice what Jesus says to them. From verse 7, if you had known me, you would have known my Father also.

From now on, you do know him and have seen him. From now on. Why does he say from now on? Because Jesus, remember, is getting them ready for what's going to happen to him.

And what's going to happen to him is he is going to walk towards the cross and he's going to be nailed to the cross so that he could purchase eternal life, salvation, reconciliation for his people. And following that, he's going to be raised again and he's going to be ascended and glorified at the right hand of the Father. So because of these things, because of these things, now is coming the time when the disciples will come into a full realization of the purposes of God.

Counter-intuitive though they seem at times to the disciples, Jesus, how can you possibly think about going to a cross? This isn't right. But this is the purposes of God.

[11:32] This is the character of God, the character of the Son to lay down his life for his people so that he may save them, so that he may take these fearful people to be his children.

From now on, you will really start to see what are the purposes of God. From now on, you'll start to see who is this Jesus, what he is like and what are the eternal purposes of the Father.

So it goes on again, just to finish off this little section. It goes on in verse 10, Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The words that I say to you, I do not speak of 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.

So he expands on what he's been saying. He wants to clarify and drill home to Philip and to the disciples who he is and what he is going to do.

[12:43] Now the second kind of link I want to think briefly about is he starts to talk here about works. Why does he do that? Well, you see he's saying to them, you need to see who I am and it's almost as if he gets to the point where he says, well, even if you're not listening to me, see the works that I've been doing.

Now this is a recurring theme. This isn't the first time this kind of evidence has been used or spoken about. The works that Jesus has been doing, the miracles, what are they for?

You know, we know that these aren't just exciting things that Jesus can do. They're not just benevolent things that Jesus can do.

These are to point to the reality of who he is. These are signs. Don Carson says, miracles are Christological signs or pointers.

I like that little phrase. So the purpose of these is to say, you know, this isn't just kind of spectacular stuff. These evidence, the person who is doing these things as the one who is the Son of God, who is God.

[13:54] And Jesus is reminding his disciples, remember these things that I've been doing. Don't forget what these things tell you about who I am.

So that's just another link in the chain, if you like. Because then what he's going on to do, the next link, is to start to talk about works as they apply to the disciples.

So again, what he's doing all the way through this is moving from these worried, fearful, anxious believers. He's giving them the full explanation of who he is, grounding them in the fact that he is the fulfillment of all that they need.

He is the incarnate Lord Jesus, who is their God, evidenced by the works they have done. And then he says, now, I'm going to tell you something else.

These works that I'm doing, and this is where we go on and see, these works that I've been doing, verse 12, truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

[15:03] You see that? These disciples, would you have thought that Jesus would say to them, well, you're going to do the same as me? Oftentimes they don't seem like likely candidates.

I identify with them a lot, maybe you do also. Making mistakes, forgetting teaching, and going on fearing when we've been reminded of why we should trust.

And yet Jesus says to these people, you're going to do as I have done. You're going to do as I have done. He's starting to speak to them about who they're going to be, and the purposes that he has for them.

Even though they may not feel like, that's the kind of thing that they're going to end up doing. So in other words, he doesn't say to them, in the big picture, again, as we just take a step back for a

minute, Jesus is speaking to them about his movement towards the cross, and all he's going to explain to them about that, and the fact that he's going to go from them, he doesn't just say to them, you know what?

See, when I go, just sit tight, don't move. You know, we say that sometimes to children, don't we? Here's a scenario.

[16:19] You're walking along in a park, and you have a child holding your hand, and you have a dog running around, and your child wants to take off that way to go and play on whatever, the climbing frame, and the dog takes off that way because he wants to go and eat somebody's barbecue.

So this is a real life situation. And what do you do? You think we have to save these 20 people gathered around the barbecue from your ridiculous dog trying to eat their barbecue.

So what are you going to do? The child is trying to take off. You take the child, sit it down, and say to the child, don't move until I get back.

Just don't go anywhere. Now, you say that because you're worried about what will happen to the child, and you don't trust the child to make the right decisions in that instant of time.

Just stay there, and you would want to put a bubble of protection around that child. For the split second, you have to run off and grab your dog. But see, here's the thing. Jesus is going to go away, and he's going to leave behind him his little children.

[17:26] And he starts to say to them, I have great purposes for you. You may not feel like I have great purposes for you, and in many cases, you're unlikely candidates to fulfill the great purposes that I have for you.

But you are going to do great works like I am doing. And of course, the passage is amazing because then he goes on to say, and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father.

Greater works than I do. Now, what does he mean by saying greater works? He doesn't just mean better miracles.

So Jesus has done astounding miracles. Jesus isn't just saying, oh, you're going to do more spectacular things than I've done. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. So he's not just talking about the disciples outdoing him in terms of impressive miracles.

What does he mean then? He doesn't just necessarily mean more. That in a way doesn't seem to do justice to what Jesus is saying here.

[18:32] But what Jesus is doing again is pointing his disciples forward to the coming age of the Gospel, where they will be those who fully understand the work, the life and the work of Jesus and all that that means for people in terms of salvation, in terms of conversion, in terms of life in the Holy Spirit, as he will go on to speak about in later passages.

This coming Gospel age, Jesus is starting to open up for his followers here. He's greater works. So this phrase, greater things. I'm just going to briefly flick back, reference in John chapter 5.

Jesus says these words in John chapter 5. I'll read from verse 19. So 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 wherever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father.

[19:57] You see what Jesus is speaking there. He's hinting again this phrase, greater works. And as he goes on to explain a little bit about what he's talking about, he starts to talk about life, and he starts to talk about judgment.

And so Jesus, again, is pointing the disciples forward to their experience, which will be to see the full work of the Son raised again, and all that that means for humanity.

The great fulfilment of the work of God through the Son for people like then and like now, us.

These greater works, these works of speaking the Gospel, of proclaiming the message of Jesus, of seeing people turn from darkness to light, of seeing crowds put their faith in the Lord Jesus, of seeing people receive the Holy Spirit and testify to all that God is doing in their lives.

And so, again, Jesus is pointing them from this initial state of being fearful and bewildered and uncertain to being people who have a clarity about who they are.

[21 : 16] They are ones who know the Son, and as they know the Son, they know the Father. And not only do they know God, remember Philip's question was, show us the Father and it's enough, Jesus says no.

You know me and all the significance of that means, and you will do greater works than I have done. You will be the ones who will know and who will go on speaking of and proclaiming and declaring and giving comfort with this great Gospel message.

And of course, again, the disciples, we don't know, but at this point, they don't quite understand all of what this means.

And in any case, even if they did, they may have been thinking, as we do, well, I can't do that. What does Jesus go on to say? We're not going to look at it just now, but Jesus goes on in the next section to talk about the fact that he will send the counsellor, the comforter, the Holy Spirit to live in them and be with them every step of the way in every situation that they face as they fulfil this great calling that he gives them.

Understanding this as the disciples and understanding this, you and I, means that when we think again back to our initial thought about God's purposes for our life, what does God want me to do?

[22 : 53] What paths does he want me to take? How does he want me to behave? Sometimes the problem we all have or are tempted to have is we can take certain verses and take them out of context.

Now, that's never more true than with a verse like verse 13. And we can read a verse like this, whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, and if we're not careful, we can apply that to any given situation that we find ourselves in, anything we may want to happen, or thing that we think God is calling us to in our lives.

But you see, understanding this big, higher calling of God on his disciples here and on his disciples throughout time is to understand that God has purposes and plans for our lives in an everyday sense, in a workplace, in a relationship, and all kinds of things. But he also has this great, wonderful, high calling, which is to be those who know and testify to who he is and what his gospel is.

And so as we start to get to the end of this section here, and when we read these verses, whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, we recognize that a verse like this calls us into an understanding of his purposes for us, and applying a verse like this in that context.

And in a situation where our desire, our underlying desire, the heart desire that we have, is to glorify his name, is to lift up the name of Jesus, is to speak clearly who Jesus is in any given situation that we get.

[24 : 43] And as we go through that process, we don't do it on our own, because we come back time and time again to him and we say, Lord Jesus, I do this in your name, and would you accompany any work that I do with your blessing?

And by your power, the gospel will go out. And so it becomes hard for us to take a verse like verse 13 and simply to apply it, if you like, selfishly, or in a very immediate sense to our own physical or temporal needs or wants.

So we've seen the fact that Jesus has spoken with love and with clarity to his fearful disciples. He's lifted up their eyes to see who he is. He's moved them into understanding of the significance of the works that he has done.

And he has given them this great sense that there will be more for them to do, but he has more for them. And so just as we're finishing and wrapping this up, it is a very immediate thing for us, isn't it?

[25 : 55] The purposes of God. The danger for us is when we only think in terms of the physical or the material or the relational things. None of this is to say that God doesn't care about those things.

God cares very much about who we are and what we do. But the problem comes when we stop recognising that there is this underlying and great high calling which we have as his followers, which is to know his truth.

Let's not forget how significant that is. To have the gospel revealed to us and to be those who in this gospel age proclaim his lordship, his kingdom, his goodness, his judgment, life in him.

So our plans, your plans you've been thinking about this afternoon, the plans that you'll think about tomorrow, are many and very, that would imagine.

They may be about your university, they may be about your work, they may be about whatever. The question is, are they wrong? Well, no, not necessarily. That's not what we're saying at all.

[27 : 09] But are they specifically what Jesus is talking about here? Well, again, no. Jesus cares about us and our lives and our decisions, but we also have to see this great high calling that Jesus is speaking about here, this great high calling.

Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father. Of course, that link there with the fact that as he goes, as he is glorified, as he finishes his work, again, we're not going into this, but he sends the Spirit so that those who are left, which now is us, his disciples, may go on in his name.

And don't forget or overlook that little section of verse 13 there, whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

See, there's the question we finish on. What motivates what we want to do in life? Again, we are many invaded, so there's lots of different things we'd like to do and lots of different paths we'd like to take.

But there's the question in an ongoing sense for us, his disciples, is my desire to be that the Father may be glorified in the Son?

[28 : 36] Does that make me pray to him when I wake, when I enter my workplace, when I come home at night and I'm frazzled and I don't feel like talking to anybody, that the Father may be glorified in the Son?

In all that I do, in every trouble I face, in every decision I have to make, and in every conversation that I have, that the Father may be glorified in the Son?

What a great calling that is for you and I to have. I'm just going to pray, and then we'll move on to the next part of our service.

Let me pray. Lord God, we ask and pray that you would show us that you love us, that you would teach us, especially if we're struggling with that moment, that you're a loving Father.

We pray that you would help us to be wise in all of the different things that we have to do in life. We recognize also that often we feel fearful and we feel unsure, even if we've been a Christian for a while.

[29 : 51] And what we need to remember is who you are. Lord Jesus, remind us again of who you are. And we thank you that because you are God, you are powerful and you're over all things, but we praise you that you bring your people into your purposes and you give us this great calling to be those who will know you and who will take your gospel out and who will testify to who you are.

Help us to want to do this. Help us to want to glorify your name. Help us to believe that many people throughout the city and within the groups and the circles within which we move may also hear about the glory of the Lord and praise His name.

We pray in Jesus. Amen.