

PRAXIS

OF

Belief

— PART 2 —



GRACEWAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

PRAXIS Of Belief

The Gospel of John

Part II
John 11 to John 21

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version Bible.

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Welcome to the May edition of Praxis!

The readings are brief, in order to cover the Scripture, present the thought, and allow time to take it in through *meditation, contemplation*, and *prayer*. We encourage you to record your responses and the things that the Holy Spirit shows you. The readings are set up according to the ancient practice of the *daily office*, with a reading for morning hours, and a reading for evening hours. Of course, when and how you do this is completely up to you, but we do encourage you to do it at the same time and place each day, in order to simplify and develop the habit.

Take your time to soak in the Word. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you each day. Even the simplest of things can bring revelation when we dedicate attention to the Spirit and the details.

This compilation has been designed to lead us into the Scripture each day, to help empower us in the Holy Spirit and Truth, and to culminate in the Home Church experience.

Make special note of the pages given to each Sunday, take time to review your readings and responses from the week. This will help prepare you for a richer experience in Home Church, through both sharing and receiving.

If you are not yet part of a Home Church, we would love to have you experience it for yourself! Find out more from the person who gave you this book, or reach us at www.GracewayRI.org

The commentary that accompanies each reading is written by Ed Pichette Sr., who serves as an elder and a Home Church Leader at Graceway Community.



The book of John is quite different from the other gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke are often referred to as the synoptic gospels. The word synoptic means "with one eye." The intended meaning of that term is simply that those three gospels discuss many of the same details and present them in more or less the same order. John is different. John tends to present the details in a somewhat different order than the others. For example, John tells the story of the cleansing of the temple near the beginning of his gospel (ch. 2) while the others all place that story more toward the end of their gospels (Matt. 21; Mk. 11; Lk. 19).

Most scholars believe that the reason for these differences is because John has a different goal in writing his gospel. While the synoptic gospels are concerned with the details of what happened and when it happened, John is more concerned about developing a theology. John's primary goal is to discuss who God is and especially who God is as seen through the coming of Jesus. To be certain, all four gospel writers are concerned about theology and what happened when. The difference is a matter of degree and how to achieve their respective goals. For the synoptic gospels, the primary goal is to tell, as precisely as possible, what happened and when. For them, the nature of God and Jesus will follow out from the details of the events. For John, the primary focus is on the nature of God and Jesus. **John presents the events of Jesus' life in an order that helps him to teach about who the Father is and who Jesus is.**

God has seen fit to preserve for us four gospels. Each contributes to a fuller picture of God AND Jesus AND the Holy Spirit. To make the most of it, we should approach each gospel individually and then compare and contrast them to build a fuller picture.

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." John. 11:1-7

The time for Jesus' sacrifice comes closer, and He begins to orchestrate the events to force the Jewish leadership to take action against Him. Lazarus will soon die. Jesus raised several people back to life in His ministry. As you would expect, when He did so there would be a huge amount of excitement and crowds of people would seek Him out. All the attention of the crowds would catch the attention of the Jewish leaders. They would then look for Jesus in hopes of seizing Him. In response, Jesus would typically retreat and escape those sent to take Him. This time it will be different. When Lazarus is raised, Jesus will stay with the crowds. The excitement will grow and the Triumphant Entry will take Jesus into Jerusalem for the Passover and His passion. He is implying that all these events will soon take place when He says of Lazarus, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

God's will is that His Son should offer Himself as an atonement for the sins of the world. In addition to the actual events of the first Good Friday, Jesus is also tasked by the Father with creating the circumstances that will lead up His death. Jesus will not be taken by surprise. In fact, He will control and direct the events that will lead up to His death.

Note v. 3 where the sisters sent to Jesus saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." In this message you can hear their faith calling out to Jesus from their need. They begin here - afraid that their brother is going to die. They are about to go on a long and trying emotional roller coaster ride. Jesus purposely postpones going when He receives their message. He's waiting for Lazarus to die. Imagine the sisters' disappointment when Lazarus dies. Upon Jesus arrival, they will express their grief to Him. Then Jesus raises Lazarus back to life! Imagine their joy. Surely they were among those who ran before Jesus as He was taken up to Jerusalem by the crowds. They must have been elated! Next comes Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. It had to hit them very hard. What must they have thought when three days later they learned of Jesus' resurrection?

⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." ¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.

John 11:8-13

In these verses we catch a glimpse into Jesus' thinking. As His passion draws closer His mood becomes darker. His will is that He should somehow be able to avoid such a horrible death. He also knows that the Father's will is that He should endure it. When His disciples encourage Jesus to avoid going to Judea, Jesus explains Himself to them. In vv. 9 & 10, He is saying that if we obey God's leading in our lives then we can know that God will bring us through. If we won't obey, then we will stumble. By disobeying we may avoid a more immediate problem as we see it. But in the long run, we will be far worse off. God's will can, at times, involve suffering in the short run. But, in the long run, His will results in joyous communion with Him and all the saints forever.

¹⁵ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." ¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." John 11:14-27

Jesus tells His disciples that Lazarus has died. He tells them He's glad He wasn't there so that they might believe. See Thomas' despair in v. 16. "Let us also go, that we may die with him." They can't see the whole picture. All they see is a fatalistic Jesus who, as far as they're concerned doesn't or won't see what is clearly going to happen.

When Jesus arrives at their home, Martha comes out to meet Him – hoping that He still might be able to do something. Mary, apparently not so hopeful, stays in the house. Jesus tells Martha that Lazarus will rise. She says she knows he'll rise on the last day. What she's wanting to ask but won't is, "Will you raise him up today?" Then Jesus makes another veiled claim to deity: Life is in God alone. When Jesus claims that He is the resurrection and the life, He's is claiming to be God.

This is followed by John's favorite word – "everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Jesus words are clearly meant for more than just Martha. They are directed to us. We are, all of us, aware of our mortality. When the time comes we all will deal with death, each in our own specific circumstances. Hear Martha's words, knowing that Lazarus is dead, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." In the midst of a very despairing time, she holds on fast to her faith.

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

John 11:28-37

Martha gets her sister and tells her that Jesus is looking for her. Mary goes to Jesus and says to Him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Mary seems to be saying that she believes that where there is life there is still hope. But once death has taken its toll, there is nothing that anyone, God Himself included, can do. In v. 37, the crowd chimes in and seems to agree with Mary that Jesus might have been able to make a difference if only He had arrived earlier.

Do you remember Jesus remark earlier about waiting for Lazarus to die before going? Perhaps Jesus waited for this very purpose. He demonstrates His power more effectively by raising a dead Lazarus back to life than if He had merely healed an ailing Lazarus. Again we see that, in the opinion of many, God's power is not complete. The thought is as though He can help us to the point of death, but once death has occurred He can do no more.

We talk all the time about trusting Jesus in all circumstances but we rarely have to stare death in the face. What about you? What does your faith say in the circumstance where death has already occurred?

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."
John 11:38-44

Jesus goes to Lazarus' tomb. He asks that the tomb be opened. Martha, who seems to have more faith than her sister says, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." The unspoken implication of her comment is that the longer someone has been dead, the harder it will be for Jesus to raise them back to life, if He can do it at all. The natural changes that follow death over time will be too much for Jesus to overcome. It is easy to say that the power of God overrules everything else. But when faced with the details that we know to be true about certain events, it can be hard to trust that God will be able to help us with our particular problem.

How difficult it must have been for Jesus. Even as He is performing the works that will very soon lead to His death, He is confronted, time and again, with a lack of faith from those who love Him most and know Him best. Can you imagine the loneliness that Jesus must have felt at times like this? That, too, is part of what He has to endure for our sake.

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people. John 2:23-24

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." John 11:45-48

Again John presents us with the contrast between those who believe and those who do not. Those who believe stay close, joyous because of what Jesus has done and eager to see what He might do next. Those who don't believe run to the Pharisees to report on Jesus' deeds. All are playing a role in God's plans. Those who believe are glorying God and providing us a model for what faith should look like. Those who don't believe are acting against God and stirring up the Jewish leadership against Jesus. This too is part of God's plan.

How ironic that even those who intend to stop Jesus are, in reality, working things out according to the Father's will.

⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

John 11:49-53

As was just mentioned, it is ironic to see how God uses those who oppose His will to further His purposes. That irony reaches a crescendo in these verses. Caiaphas, the high priest says, "Nor do you understand that it better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." John makes it plain for us that Caiaphas had no clue about what he was saying. Even though he did not know it, God, by the Holy Spirit, was working in Caiaphas and giving him His words to speak. I think God had John include this to demonstrate clearly to us just how complete and total is His control over our lives.

⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. ⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. John 11:54-57

For the moment, Jesus evades arrest. But it's only a temporary retreat. He will soon bring things to a climax and force the Jewish leaders to act against Him. Imagine His anxiety as the time comes closer and closer. His sense of isolation must have become almost unbearable. His only consolation was that the Father heard Him. As John told us at the end of chapter 2, He trusted Himself to no man. But He did completely put Himself in the Father's hands. There was a day not too far in the future when even the Father would forsake Him. To pay the price of sin, even the Father would turn His back on the Son.

To pay the entire price of sin, death must be faced completely alone. Anyone who refuses to accept Jesus' sacrifice will, by their own choice, encounter eternal death, totally alone. Complete and eternal isolation – totally apart from God; and therefore, since God is the source of everything, apart from everything. What a horrible thought!

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
Matthew 27:46

Remember, He was a human being like you and me. He would have to face death completely alone, trusting that the Father would not leave Him dead but would raise Him back up to life – just like you and me!

¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial." ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

John 12:1-8

Less than a week before His suffering, death and resurrection, Jesus goes back to Bethany and joins in a dinner party with Lazarus and his sisters. Mary, who had shown less faith than her sister Martha, washes Jesus feet with her hair, and pours on expensive perfume. John tells us that Judas Iscariot was a thief.

John is the only gospel writer to give us that bit of information. Judas is upset, not on account of the poor as he claims, but because of his own personal loss. Jesus' response gives yet another clue to His disciples about what will soon happen to Him.

⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

John 12:9-11

Now John lets us know that Jesus' plans are working out as He intends. Jesus' actions are having their effect. Many Jews were coming to believe in Jesus. The chief priests are seeking all the more to put Jesus to death and Lazarus as well. (Have you ever thought that Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised back to life, was one of a very few people in scripture who had to die TWICE to this life?)

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."
John 12:12-19

Jesus' work is just about finished. A crowd has assembled in Bethany because they've heard about Lazarus' resurrection. Having celebrated this miracle, they now come to Jesus with praise and honor. Remember how many times Jesus had encouraged people to believe in Him because of what He had done – the same things that He saw the Father doing. Note the people's words here. "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

By worshiping Him "in the name of the Lord," they are worshiping Him for doing the same things that the Father does – things done under the authority of the Father. When they call Him "the King of Israel," they show that they now see Him as the equal of the Father.

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. ²¹ So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

John 12:20-26

The time for Jesus' sacrifice is at hand. The time of His public ministry is over. When some people approach Philip asking to speak to Jesus, Jesus' response is that it's now time for Him to be glorified. He tells Philip that His death will be very fruitful. He then gives Philip what may be the most important aphorism in scripture. "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Do not hold on so closely to this life that you lose sight of what God is asking you to do while it lasts. This life is surely temporary. Do not try to secure this transitory life at all costs. According to scripture, not only will the effort be in vain, but it also has implications on the life to come.

²⁷ "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. John 12:27-33

Jesus is troubled by the knowledge of what will soon take place. His will is that He might be spared this trial if there is any other way. Of course, He also knows that there is no other way. He proclaims that He has come into the world for this very purpose - to die in your place and mine. Having stated the source of His "trouble," He then says how He will deal with it - "Father, glorify your name." He will put His will aside and do the Father's will.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

This trial was what loving the Father and loving His neighbor meant for Jesus. What does it mean for you to love God and neighbor?

Notes from Home Church

Community Prayers

³⁴ So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

John 12:34-36

The people had been taught that the Messiah, when He came, would remain with them forever. For them, He simply had to come and stay. But Jesus knew how this verse would find its fulfillment. He would come, die, be resurrected, ascend to heaven and later come a second time. His existence is eternal. He has always been with His people and He will always be with us. The mode of His presence with us changes over time. Today He is present with us by His Spirit - the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 16:7 and Phil 1:19.)

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? **1 Corinthians 3:16**

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **2 Corinthians 3:17**

³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." ⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. ⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. John 12:37-43

Verses 39-40 are quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10.

⁹ And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Isaiah 6:9-10

It may seem, here in John 12, that God is blinding the eyes and hardening the hearts of people to keep them from repenting and being saved. But a closer look at Isaiah 6 helps to clear things up. In Isaiah 6:9-10 we see God encouraging Isaiah to continue preaching the message God has given him even though the people will not receive it. In so doing Isaiah makes "the heart of this people dull." The people become hardened to the word as it is repeated over and over again and met over and over again with disbelief. It is the people themselves who harden their own hearts. God has sent His message clearly through Isaiah, but it has been met only with disbelief so God gives the people over to exile since they will not repent.

In the same way, here in the NT, those who will not repent of their sin are given over to the penalty due their sin. Through Isaiah God hardens the unbelievers' hearts by repeating His offer of salvation over and over to no good effect. Unbelievers, by refusing to believe, become like the idols they worship, unable to see and unable to hear! (Psalm 115:4-8)

In v. 42, John concludes this section saying that, in spite of the unbelief of many, there were many authorities who, although afraid to say so publicly, did put their faith and trust in Jesus.

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment-- what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

John 12:44-50

Once again Jesus bases His authority not on Himself but on His Father. This is a recurrent theme in John and the other gospels. Others came through Jerusalem from time to time claiming to be the Messiah. Many, if not most, were violent men who wound up in prison or dead.

Remember Barabbas, the prisoner that Pilate released to the people. His name, Barabbas, is Aramaic. It means son of the father. While no one can say for sure, he may have been a false messiah who claimed that he would free Jerusalem from foreign rulers. Jesus' intent, by basing His authority on the Father, was to drive people back to the scripture - the Father's word - where they might see what He, the true Messiah, would look like - what He would do and say. Then they might come to understand that He was the true Messiah. But just as it happened with the prophet Isaiah, the repeated calls to repentance only dimmed the eyes and dulled the hearing of those who refused to see and hear.

¹ Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."
John 13:1-10

At the Passover meal, Jesus takes the opportunity to wash His disciples feet. The roads in Palestine were dusty. When guests arrived at a friend's house for supper, it was customary to have a servant wash their feet to cleanse them. Here Jesus girds Himself with a towel and perform this menial task. The imagery is clear. Before the supper He washed their feet with water. After the supper, His arrest, trial and crucifixion would quickly follow. He would wash them again, this second time with His blood to cleanse them from their sin.

At first, Peter refuses to allow Jesus to wash him. Once he realizes that this is the only way he can have no relationship with Jesus, Peter answers, then not just my feet, but wash my hands and my head too! Jesus says that it is only necessary to wash his feet. Accepting Jesus is a humbling experience. To accept Him is to reject all else. When a person receives Jesus, s/he is declaring that everything they used to believe they now count as nothing. Before they thought that they would find a way to God on their own. Now they know that the only way to the Father is through the Son.

⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ Philippians 3:8

¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. John 13:11-17

Jesus here explains that since He who is the Teacher has washed our feet, so we should also wash one another's feet. If He, who is above all, is willing to humble Himself and perform the most menial tasks for us, then we ought to be willing to do the same for each other.

Our pride can become the root of all sorts of evil. It's important to remember, especially when we are demeaned by others, that we are to be their servant. When we are mistreated, if we respond by mistreating others, then we are wrong. This is not who we are!

How difficult Jesus it must have been for Jesus to endure His suffering without offering even a word against those who were persecuting Him. He had to remain silent. He was dying for the very ones who were killing Him. If He had spoken out against them, He could not claim that He was loving them and offering Himself on their behalf. For the sake of His integrity and that of the Father, He did not curse. He completely and totally entrusted Himself into the Father's care.

We are all familiar with the failure of giving into temptation of a far lesser degree than our Lord and Savior. Thank God that when we are weak, the Spirit of God living in us is able to sustain us through difficult times.

May we walk close enough to God that when trials come, our response is to submit ourselves to His leading and overcome pride – to love when even it is very costly to love.

God Himself is living in us and will offer us all we need in all circumstances. Do you fully trust Him in this?

¹⁸ I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'
¹⁹ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." ²¹ After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." ²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. ²³ One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, ²⁴ so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. John 13:18-26

Jesus tells His disciples that one of them is a traitor. The disciples are curious to know who this traitor is. When John asks Him, Jesus tells him that Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, is the traitor.

In v. 20, Jesus repeats the idea once again for us that His authority is from the Father. He depends upon the Father's witness to prove that He genuinely is who He claims to be. Jesus provides all these details so that later, after He'd been raised from the dead His disciples might remember these things and, finding them foretold in scripture, would be even more convinced that He truly is the Son of God.

²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. ³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.

John 13:27-32

Satan enters Judas and drives him into his treachery. Jesus is acutely aware of what is happening. He does not try to stop Judas. Rather He tells Judas to do quickly what he is going to do. John makes it clear that no one else at the table was aware.

Note the end of v. 30, "it was night." Darkness reigns for the time being. Satan will be allowed to control events as he desires. The great irony here is that Satan is actually doing the very thing that will prove to be his undoing. So it is with all sin. Often the one who sins feels he is somehow benefiting himself. But the truth is, of course, that sin causes great harm.

Interestingly, it is at night, in the darkness, that the Son of Man is glorified. Jesus, who is the Light of the World, walks bravely into the darkness to expose the devil and all sin for what they are. His actions will condemn Satan and offer atonement to people who will repent of their sins and turn to Him.

³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." ³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." ³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

John 13:33-38

Jesus says that He is giving a new commandment, "that you love one another: just as I have loved you." The idea that we are to love one another is not new. Jesus had earlier in His ministry taught that to love God and neighbor is the very heart of the law:

³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." **Matthew 22:35-40**

What is different is the extent that we should go to in loving one another. We are to love one another "as I have loved you." Driven by His love for us, Jesus held nothing back. As the Father had asked Him, He poured out His very life for our sake. Now, we can love one another as He loved us.

It's important to remember that in ourselves, we are not capable of this kind of love. We have been given the Spirit of God to empower us with this love and renew us. In verse 37, Peter brashly claims that he loves Jesus to the extent that he is willing to lay down his life for Him. Jesus' response is that he does not yet love Him as he ought. We'll see toward the end of this gospel that Jesus will restore Peter and tell him that he will have the opportunity to love as he claims here. We can trust that when and if we find ourselves in such a desperate and difficult situation, He will empower us to be able to love as He loves.

¹ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:1-6

The last few verses of chapter 13 can be very heavy indeed. Having written them, John goes on to quote Jesus saying, "Let not your hearts be troubled." God does not want us walking around fearful of some great trial that awaits us in the future. We are simply to put our faith in God and love Him. That will keep us safe.

¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.
1 John 4:18

Jesus promises that He will return and bring us to Himself. When Thomas says, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus responds, "I am the way, and the truth and the life." Truly salvation is found in Him and nowhere else.

¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
Acts 4:11-12

⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 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 on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. John 14:7-11

Jesus reiterates that to know Him is to know the Father. This message His disciples had heard time and again from the start of His ministry. Yet, despite this, Philip immediately says, "Show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Read Jesus' response in vv. 9-11.

Imagine Jesus' frustration. His disciples, those who know Him best, after three years of following Him and listening to His teaching, still do not grasp this basic fundamental truth about who He is! Whatever the thoughts that ran through Jesus' mind at this point, in just a few verses He explains to His disciples that the Holy Spirit will remind them of all that they need at the proper time.

²⁶ But 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. John 14:26

At times it may feel as though we do not yet know all that we need to know. It can even become burdensome to think of all the work and study it would require to know what we feel we should know. These verses provide solace and encouragement for times like this. We don't need to depend on our own knowledge or abilities. Jesus wants us to depend on Him and His Spirit.

May we learn to trust that He will always remind us of all that we need when we need it. Of course, that does not excuse us from doing our due diligence to engage in the learning process. That's simply being a disciple! However, it does remove the pressure of performance.

³ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 2 Corinthians 3:5

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. ¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 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.

John 14:12-19

Those who believe in Him will do even greater things than Jesus did because, "I am going to the Father." When Jesus ascended to the Father the Holy Spirit came to dwell in the hearts of believers. It was by the power of the Spirit that those first believers saw mighty miracles at work in and through them.

I think there are two reasons why we see little of this in our time. First, I wonder about our faith. Do we have the same deep and abiding faith that the early church did? Do we expect God to move through us as the early church did? Second, I wonder if we put ourselves in situations where the Spirit will move. The first disciples spoke boldly everywhere they went preaching the Word of God. The Spirit, working in Jesus' life worked miracles as a witness to the truth that Jesus was teaching. Do we spread the Word into our communities like they did?

We do hear of miracles happening in parts of the world where the gospel of Christ is preached clearly and with boldness; and the church is expanding in these places. Perhaps, if we dared to share the gospel with that same freedom and boldness, the Spirit might move and work miracles as proof of the things we would be saying.

²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "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. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. John 14:20-24

Here is a theme that is very important to Jesus. He extends the concept of unity that exists between the Father and the Son to include us, those who believe in Him. This theme of unity will be developed much further in chapter 17 of John's gospel. Chapter 17 is commonly known as "The High Priestly Prayer." (More on this later.)

You may be familiar with the process that took place in order to develop the New Testament we have today. It took centuries for the church to determine which books belonged in the NT. In the process there were, as you might expect, many discussions about how to determine which books to include and which to exclude. There were those who wanted to leave the gospels out of the canon. They argued that there was too much disagreement between grace as explained in Paul's letters and passages like verse 21 above, where Jesus says, "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me."

The discussion in the church about "grace vs. works" is even older than the reformation! As we've seen before, there is only one gospel message. Salvation is offered to all people on the basis of faith alone. What Jesus is saying here in v. 21, and other similar verses in the gospels, is that if a person truly has faith, then good works expressed through keeping the commandments will necessarily follow. Those works do not save but they do provide evidence that faith is genuine and, as a result of genuine faith, salvation is realized.

²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But 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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, John 14:25-30

Jesus now tells his disciples explicitly that the Holy Spirit will come soon and will continue the work that He began. The Spirit will teach them and remind them of all He had said. Jesus reassures them that they don't need to fear. Though Satan is coming and for a time it will appear as though he has won, that time will be short. It will very quickly become apparent that Jesus has won the victory! In some of the last moments that Jesus shares with His disciples, He wants to reassure them that things will work out as He intends. He will overcome death and His disciples will find the unity that He'd spoken of.

When trials come your way, do you remind yourself that they cannot last forever? Remember that although it may seem like a long time waiting, God's provision will eventually meet all your needs! Scripture affirms for us that night itself will pass away and the Lord will be our light.

⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:4-5

³¹ 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. **John 14:31**

This chapter concludes with Jesus stating that the proof of His love for the Father is the very fact that He did as the Father commanded. Love is demonstrated by what it does. If it does nothing, then it is nothing.

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:14-16**

The Father's love for us resulted in Him taking great measures, at great cost to Himself, to restore good relationship between Him and us. Jesus offered His obedience to the Father as proof of His love for Him. The same is true for every believer. No one will be saved by doing good works. At the same time, all who believe will submit themselves to God and their obedience will result in good works. Those good works serve as proof, both to the world and to the believer, that faith is genuine.

Notes from Home Church

Community Prayers

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 15:1-11

Jesus encourages us to remain faithful to do what the Spirit leads us to do. He says explicitly that the branch without fruit will be removed. He goes on to explain the bigger picture. "Abide in me, and I in you." The starting place is having faith and because of that faith, Jesus by His Holy Spirit, is in you! This is how the good fruit is produced. When we stay rooted in Him then we will bear much fruit.

Take another look at verse 8. If you abide in Him, you will bear much fruit and in this way you will glorify the Father. What does it look like to abide? "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love." This is how Jesus did it and how we are called to as well.

The Holy Spirit in every sincere believer not only shows us how to live, but gives us the strength to do those things. He gives us success in all these things. There is no need to fear or doubt! Note how this section ends, that in living this way, we will find true joy.

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another. John 15:12-17

In the earlier verses of this chapter, Jesus explains how you keep the most important of the commandments – to love God. As we saw above, obeying the Father as the Spirit leads, guides and enables us to demonstrate our love for Him.

Now Jesus tells us to keep the second of the two primary commandments – to love your neighbor as yourself. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Jesus is saying that what was true for Him is also true for you. Is there anything that you would refuse to sacrifice for your neighbor? Is there anything you'd refuse to sacrifice for God? Most of us will not be asked to make the ultimate sacrifices of our own lives, but some have and more will be. Even today, in some parts of the world, people are giving up their lives for Jesus' sake.

These are sobering thoughts. How far are you willing to go in your love for God and neighbor?

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

John 15:18-21

Having explained the lengths to which you may have to go in your relationship with God, Jesus now offers a word of comfort. He wants you to know that whatever the Father may ask you to do, you will not be the first or only one asked to offer everything to God. Jesus Himself has gone before you. Jesus says that, as a follower of His, you no longer belong to the world. The result of not belonging to the world - "the world hates you."

Since the world persecuted Him, it will persecute you. In verse 21, Jesus tells us to remember, at the bottom of it all, the real issue is not about you. The real issue is that the world does not know the Father. As a believer God asks you to love a world that does not love you in return. Loving those who hate you is a difficult task. This is a Divine Love, not of this world.

Do not expect the world to change its mind and to decide to love you. That will not happen. At the same time, never forget that God loves you, is for you and is working all things together for your good. He wants you to trust Him and hold fast until the end.

⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'
Revelation 2:7

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' ²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. John 15:22-27

The gospel is a double-edged sword. For those who hear the Word and repent, it leads to shalom; for those who reject it, the Word brings guilt for their sin and removes any and all excuse.

When Jesus came, He revealed the Father. To mock and despise Him is to mock and despise the Father. Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit is active and moving throughout the world. He is living in the heart of every true believer leading and enabling us to use the gifts that He brings to glorify the Father. He is working in the lives of all unbelievers to point them to Jesus, that they might repent and be saved.

¹ "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴ But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

John 16:1-12

As His time is drawing to a close, Jesus tells His disciples what to expect. He tells them that people, thinking they are doing service to God, will try to kill them. Jesus reminds them that the persecution they will face is not due to them. The persecution is due to the fact that people don't know Jesus or the Father. Jesus knows they'll be sorry when He leaves, but He encourages them. He lets them know it's to their advantage that He goes so that the Spirit might come. He identifies the Spirit by the title "Helper." His presence with us is better than Jesus' presence, because the human being Jesus could be in only one place at a time, but the Spirit is present with each and every believer living right inside us. He is a true Helper! As Jesus said, He will a) convict the world of sin and righteousness and b) convict the world concerning judgment.

Through you and me The Holy Spirit is effective today working to attain the two major goals listed above. He wants people to see their sin and what true righteousness looks like so that they will turn from their sin, repent and enter in a vital living relationship with Jesus. He wants people to be convinced of judgment. He wants them to understand that God is a just and holy God. While it is hard for us to grasp how He can bring justice in every case where it is needed, we trust that the Father will do so. He is holy and so we must be holy as well.

How is the Spirit moving in your life to accomplish the Father's goals?

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁶ "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me."

John 16:13-16

As Jesus continues speaking of the Holy Spirit, He gives us some idea of what the Trinity is. Note how the Spirit guides us "into all truth." That truth is the Father's and the Son has come to make the Father's truth known in the world. So the goal of the Spirit's work is the same goal that the Father and the Son are pursuing.

The Spirit "will not speak on His own authority." This mirrors what Jesus said about Himself – that He did only what He saw the Father doing. So just as the Son submitted Himself to the Father, so does the Spirit. Verse 14 reiterates this idea, as the Son worked to bring glory to the Father, so the Spirit will work to bring glory to the Son. As Jesus has been given everything the Father has, the Spirit has access to all things as well. The Spirit will make all things known to us as He works in us to accomplish the Father's purpose through us. The three are one. One in unity; one in purpose!

¹⁷ So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" ¹⁸ So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." ¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?" ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. ²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. John 16:17-22

Jesus' words may seem quite clear to us. His disciples freely admitted that they were at a loss. We have the tremendous advantage of knowing the rest of the story. We know that the Father's plan was the death of the Messiah. We know that the primary purpose of Jesus' coming was that He would be crucified for our sins. But, at this point in the story, the disciples don't know that at all. More likely they expected, as many Jews did in that time, that the Messiah would grow in popularity and power. They probably expected that Jesus would be magnified on earth and they themselves also since they were His disciples! For them, the crucifixion came out of left field. That explains their behavior - they were shocked. They were broken and afraid for their own lives. Overnight their world was turned upside down. Their joy was turned to mourning. One minute Jesus was with them and He was being praised by the crowds as they made their way into Jerusalem. After celebrating the Passover meal with Jesus, things went very bad very fast.

For most of us today, life with Jesus is joyful and full. Do you expect that it will always be this way? How would you respond if you found out tomorrow, perhaps in a very sudden way, that your circumstances went in another direction? Would you be certain that God was still in control? For you, how much depends on what is happening in your life and how much depends on your faith in Jesus? What do you do when you're in the middle of the story, things are not going well and you don't yet know how it will end?

²³ In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. ²⁵ "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸ I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." ²⁹ His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!" John 16:23-29

Jesus continues talking with His disciples. In verse 23 He tells them that the Father will give them whatever they ask in His name. He offers them comforting words that they might hold onto when, all too soon, things will seem to fall apart and their Lord will be killed. Jesus tells them that He will soon be leaving the world. At this the disciples respond and say, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!" They thought they understood and perhaps they did have a better grip on things than they'd had earlier. But I don't think they really understood all that still lay ahead – the threats against Jesus and themselves, His bravery in facing the brutal punishment that awaited Him and their cowardice in denying Him and deserting Him in His trial and crucifixion. How difficult it must have been for His disciples in the hours that led up to His death and then on the following days before His resurrection! Easter morning is glorious indeed. The time beginning on Friday and ending on Saturday night must have been unbearable. But here's the rub; if there is no Good Friday, there can be no Easter morning.

Whatever trials may come against you, you know that God will bring you through and when your test is past, then you will know a far greater joy than you ever could have known before being tested.

³⁰ Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God." ³¹ Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? ³² Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. ³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:30-33

The disciples demonstrate their faith in Jesus in v. 30. Jesus responds by asking if they do believe. He knows they trust Him, but they don't know what is coming and how their faith will be sorely tested. Jesus foretells how they will be scattered and abandon Him. But He assures them that He will not be totally abandoned - the Father is with Him. He warns them that they will experience tribulation in the world. But He also assures them that He has overcome the world.

We too should not be surprised when tribulation and trial comes our way. We can rest assured that Jesus has overcome the world. When tough times do come, put your faith in Jesus and expect that He will bring you through to a glorious victory!

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. ⁶ "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

John 17:1-10

Chapter 17 of John's gospel is famously known as "The High Priestly Prayer." Having completed His conversation with the disciples in chapter 16, Jesus turns His attention to praying to the Father. Pay attention to the things that He highlights in this prayer. These are issues that are of central importance to the Father. As Jesus begins, He asks that the Father would glorify Him that He might glorify the Father. The Father will glorify Him by raising Him back to life after He dies. Jesus' resurrection is the most important fact about Christianity. His resurrection is the pivotal point around which our faith is centered. Paul said that if Christ is not raised then we Christians are the most pitiful of all people.

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

Many so-called Christian churches have turned away from believing that Jesus was actually raised from the dead. They can't imagine that anyone could live again having died. As we saw in the case of Lazarus' death, many people believe that death is beyond the reach of God. What do you believe about this?

³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." Luke 1:37

¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

John 17:11-17

As Jesus prayed for us He prayed that we would be one even as He and the Father were one. Jesus wants us to understand how vital our unity is. Many, perhaps all, of the spiritual gifts that God gives are useless without unity. Of what use is hospitality if no one will come to your party? How can one teach if people will not gather to hear the teaching? What good is there in prophecy if there is no one to hear the prophecy?

The survival of the church and its ability to fulfill God's purpose for it depend critically on our unity. Jesus goes on to say that the world will hate us because we won't conform to its demands. Jesus expressly says that He will not ask the Father to take us out of the world, but that the Father would protect us from Satan. He asks the Father to sanctify us in the truth – which is His word!

¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **John 17:18-21**

Jesus says that He is sending His disciples into the world as the Father sent Him into the world. He goes on to add that He is praying here not just for His disciples but for all those who would believe based on their word. He asks that His disciples and those who believe through them might all be one. Jesus asks that we would be united with His disciples! According to this prayer, it is through this unity, that the world will believe!

Our unity with one another, aided and assisted by the Holy Spirit abiding in us, is a very powerful tool effective in spreading the gospel!

22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:22-26

Jesus emphasizes the importance of our unity. In v. 23 He says, "That they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me." If we will be perfectly united then the result will be that the world will come to know Jesus. That is a remarkable statement. Somehow, Jesus expects that as we each live out our lives fulfilling our Spirit given roles (gifts) and tasks and remain in unity, that will result in people coming to know Jesus. We have, then, a corporate responsibility as Christians.

I often think of how I should use the gift(s) that the Holy Spirit has given to me to glorify God. My focus is, according to what Jesus is saying here, too small. It is not a case of me simply exercising my spiritual gift. Rather, it is a matter of me, being who I should be and doing what I should do in Christ, IN UNITY WITH OTHER BELIEVERS. As we, the church, together live out our lives as Christians, then it is that the world will know that Jesus is the Christ.

Here in Rhode Island, on top of our state house is a statue of the independent man. The American ideal. The individual, alone, against all the world forging a way forward to make a good and happy life for him/herself. It is hard to imagine a picture more opposed to the truth of the gospel. What this world values, God calls foolishness. What God values, this world calls foolishness. For life to be full, joyous and purposeful it must be shared. Our strength is not in isolation, shunning even inconsequential relationships with others. To live in unity, as Jesus is praying for us here, is to become very vulnerable to one another – deeply interdependent on one another. It is a risky business. But that vulnerability will bring with it a tremendous power to reach the world for Jesus' sake.

Do we dare to give ourselves to God and to one another so that Jesus' goal might be achieved?

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵ They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."

John 18:1-9

Now John moves on to tell the story of Jesus' arrest, trial and death. Judas leads a band of soldiers out to Jesus. Of course this happens at night under cover of the darkness. Jesus does not try to hide behind His disciples. Rather He steps forward to face the challenge head on. He asks them whom they seek. They answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus then says, "I am he." This is a variation of the divine name - "I am." Even now, He is declaring publicly who He truly is. His hearers are still deaf.

At this remark, several soldiers, perhaps Judas included, are struck to the ground. No doubt all those around were startled by this and there was probably an awkward silence lasting a few seconds. So Jesus asks again whom they seek. They respond in the same way as before so Jesus tells them who He is again, "I told you that I am he." He tells them to let the disciples go. He is offering Himself in order to protect His friends. He continues to do all that the Father asks of Him. He holds nothing back. His self-control as He goes through His ordeal is incredible. He masters Himself and is diligent to be sure to do all that the Father asks of Him.

Notes from Home Church

Community Prayers

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" ¹² So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³ First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. ¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. John 18:10-16

When Peter used his sword to cut off the servant's ear, you would expect that the soldiers would quickly respond in kind and the situation would rapidly devolve into a bloody mess. Apparently Jesus responds quickly enough, healing the servant, to avoid any further violence.

For His disciples' sake and ours, Jesus says again that what is happening is the Father's will. Despite the miraculous display of Jesus' power, the soldiers arrest and bind Him. They lead Him away. Some of His disciples run away. Others follow at a distance. Peter and John follow and manage to get into the courtyard.

¹⁷ The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸ Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. ¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." ²² When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?"

John 18:17-23

When questioned about whether or not he is a disciple of Jesus, Peter denies knowing Jesus. This is the first of Peter's denials. When questioned by the high priest about His teaching, Jesus answers that He taught openly before many witnesses. If the high priest wants to know what Jesus taught, he should ask any of those many witnesses. Then one of the soldiers strikes Jesus claiming that Jesus is being flippant showing disrespect for the high priest. Jesus' response is to claim that He spoke only the truth.

This questioning and the trial to come are nothing more than a farce. The Jewish rulers are not looking for the truth. All they want is an excuse to charge Him with crimes against Rome. They want Him dead and they have no power to put Him to death. But if they can charge Him with insurrection, then they can turn Him over to Rome and Rome will do their murderous work for them.

²⁴ Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. ²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷ Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed. ²⁸ Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" ³⁰ They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." ³¹ Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." John 18:24-31

Peter denies Jesus for a second, and third time, followed by the rooster crowing as Jesus had foretold. His cowardice in Jesus' time of need will trouble Peter greatly. At the end of this gospel, we'll see Jesus reach out to Peter to help him deal with his behavior and to put him back on the track that God has for him.

When Annas fails to find an accusation against Jesus, he sends Jesus to Caiaphas, the high priest. Caiaphas does not seem to get what they want either so they send Him before Pilate. When Pilate asks why they are there, they try to answer simply that He is an evildoer. Pilate tells them to deal with the matter themselves. Now the Jews let Pilate know what they really want. They want Jesus dead and they want him to do it since they cannot.

The hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders is plain to see. They want Jesus dead but they don't want to violate the law by killing Him themselves. They want to excuse themselves of any guilt by not actually murdering Him or ordering His murder themselves. It's easy to find fault with these leaders but their behavior is not uncommon. We all can find ways to try to justify ourselves when we know we're in the wrong. May God help us to be honest and brave enough to face the truth about ourselves. If we claim to worship God, then we must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23-24

³² This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. ³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." **John 18:32-36**

Jesus had predicted that He would be crucified – Rome’s method of choice for killing criminals. Next, John records the conversation between Jesus and Pilate. Pilate has the sense to know what this is really about. So he asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answers by asking Pilate if he thinks Jesus is King of the Jews or if he heard someone else say it. Of course Pilate is no believer. He is offering Jesus an out. If Jesus will simply admit He’s not the King of the Jews, then, Pilate hopes, the Jews will relent.

When Jesus refuses to back down, Pilate asks, “What have you done?” Jesus responds that His kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is the kingdom of heaven where righteousness and justice are realized. So Jesus answers Pilate’s question. He is a king but His kingdom is not like this world. His kingdom is one that reflects Him. His people and His kingdom were created in and have been restored to His image.

³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world-- to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" ⁴⁰ They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. **John 18:37-40**

Pilate tries to engage Jesus in conversation. He imagined that Jesus would be some sort of brute like the others he had dealt with in the past who had claimed to be the Messiah of Israel. But Jesus doesn't fit the pattern he's used to. I'd expect, based on Jesus' response to Pilate, that Pilate thought Jesus was some sort of deluded fool. Pilate probably also thought that Jesus was harmless enough and so wanted to let Him go free. Pilate's plan was to offer the people either Jesus or Barabbas. Barabbas' name is Aramaic and means "Son of the Father." So it's a possibility that Barabbas was himself a messianic pretender. Barabbas, however, was a violent man. Pilate must have thought that the Jews would be much happier having Jesus on the streets rather than Barabbas.

¹Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. ²And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. ³They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. ⁴Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." ⁵So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" ⁶When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

John 19:1-6

Pilate has Jesus scourged. Perhaps he thinks that the Jews will be appeased by this. Perhaps they will not demand that Jesus be crucified. After scourging Him, Pilate brings Him out before the people and tells them that he finds no fault in Him. The Jewish leaders cry out for His crucifixion. Pilate attempts to give Jesus over into the hands of the Jews.

⁷ The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." ⁸ When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" ¹¹ Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin." ¹² From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." ¹³ So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. John 19:7-13

When the Jews tell Pilate that according to their law, Jesus must be killed because he claimed to be the Son of God, Pilate becomes very afraid. So Pilate goes to Jesus seeking some way to set Him free. Jesus won't cooperate. Jesus knows what's going on and He offers Pilate some solace by saying, "He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

Pilate continues to find a way to let Jesus go. The Jews try to force their agenda. By saying that Pilate would not be Caesar's friend if he lets Jesus go, they are telling Pilate that, if he will not condemn Jesus, then they will do their best to condemn Pilate as well as Jesus.

This is a typical tactic with our common enemy, Satan. If you will not do his bidding willingly, then he will attempt to threaten you. The devil hates mankind. For those who refuse to willingly obey him, he will resort to ridicule and attacks.

**¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" ¹⁵ They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." ¹⁶ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."
John 19:14-19**

Pilate brings Jesus out before the Jews. He says, "Behold your king." The Jews cry out for His crucifixion. They claim they have no king but Caesar. Their claim is more true than they would like. For them politics was a very important part of their belief system. One of their goals was that the Messiah should restore the political fortunes of Israel. Jesus did not fit the bill. Pilate, perhaps attempting to infuriate these Jews who have forced his hand, writes a sign to be hung over Jesus' head as He dies. "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." There is an irony here. Pilate, a Gentile Roman soldier, acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah and condemns Jesus to death at the demand of the Jewish leaders, who should have but did not recognize Jesus for who He was.

Does Jesus and the way He works in your life through the Holy Spirit always line up perfectly with your idea of who He is or how you expect Him to work in your life? Does He have veto power over your will?

²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." John 19:20-22

When the Jewish leaders see the inscription that Pilate has prepared, they ask him to change it. They do not want to be known as the people who demanded the killing of Israel's true king. By having the inscription written in three languages, Pilate made as sure as he could that everyone would be able to read it - no matter what language(s) they spoke. In Palestine just about everyone could speak one of Latin or Greek in addition to Aramaic. Pilate refuses to change what he has written saying, "What I have written I have written."

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things, ²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. ²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:23-30

In the next few verses we find several events that fulfilled OT prophecies concerning the crucifixion. Verses 23-24 tell how the soldiers tore up some of His clothes and cast lots for others. This was prophesied in Psalm 22.

¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.
Psalm 22:18

In verses 25-27, Jesus commands John to take care of His mother. John tells us that he took her into his care. And in verse 28, Jesus says he's thirsty.

²¹ They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.
Psalm 69:21

For an OT description of the crucifixion, read Isaiah 53.

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.
Isaiah 53:12

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness-- his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth-- that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."
John 19:31-37

In these verses we find two more instances where OT prophecies about the crucifixion are fulfilled. The first is in verse 36 concerning the breaking the bones of the Passover lamb.

¹² They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones; according to all the statute for the Passover they shall keep it. Numbers 9:12

The second, mentioned in verse 37, talks about Jesus' side being pierced.

¹⁰ "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Zechariah 12:10

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. John 19:38-42

When His body is taken down from the cross, Joseph of Arimathea places Him in a new tomb and Nicodemus comes on the scene again. Apparently he had become a believer at some point after his conversation with Jesus. Neither of these men were very vocal about their belief in Jesus. The passage mentions that Joseph was a secret believer for fear of the Jews.

It's a difficult place to be where you become a believer but, for fear of how the world may react to you, you keep your faith a secret. When a person first comes to faith this may be acceptable for a while. But as time goes on and one grows in their faith, it should become clear that the Holy Spirit, living inside that believer, has some gifting for that person. Acting out the gifting that the Spirit has given will bring a person to a place where their faith becomes known.

¹ Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes.

John 20:1-10

Mary Magdalene comes to Jesus' tomb and finds it empty. She runs to tell Peter and John. They run to the tomb. As they go, John outruns Peter. Although he gets there first, John doesn't enter the tomb. Upon arriving, Peter does enter, then John follows. They find Jesus' burial clothes folded up but He is not there. So they go back home. Even after all that Jesus had told them about His resurrection, it does not occur to them that He is risen.

As we saw earlier with Lazarus' sisters, our expectation that death is final and irreversible is deep seeded and hard to overcome. That kind of thinking is what underlies the reasoning of many "believers" today who claim that Jesus' resurrection was only a spiritual thing - without a physical reality. People find it hard to believe that God could be bigger than His creation. It's easier to believe that He can cause creation, simply because here we are! Our eyes and ears inform us that creation has occurred. Yet going further to believe in things beyond what we can see or fathom is more difficult.

Many today want to think that science will somehow explain how creation happened on its own without any external cause. But for many others, believing that is even harder than believing that God created. In any case, their knowledge of the world says that creation happened so they accept it as true while being unsure about how it happened. Likewise, the human experience demonstrates that all living things die eventually and that once something living dies, it stays dead. Without any experience of resurrection, the natural belief is that resurrection is impossible. Can you get past what your eyes and ears tell you?

³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." Luke 1:37

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).
John 20:11-16

Apparently, Mary had returned with Peter and John. Even though Peter and John find His clothes, when they can't find Him they simply go home. Mary is left alone. She wants to show her love for her Lord by caring for His body, but she doesn't know where to find Him. Into her pain and deep sense of loss Jesus shows up.

That's what our God does! When all hope is lost, when there is nothing more to do and we can't imagine that our problem could ever be resolved in our favor; when we finally admit that we have reached the end of ourselves, then God shows up. At first she thinks that He is just the gardener. When He calls her name, as He had many times before, she recognizes Him.

In my life Jesus has called my name many times. I did not hear Him for a long time. But one day He found me and opened my eyes to see and my ears to hear. We sometimes talk about how we came to Jesus. The truth is that Jesus comes to us and reveals Himself in ways that make us know that He's been there all along - even when we had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear.

Notes from Home Church

Community Prayers

¹⁷ 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.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"-- and that he had said these things to her. ¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

John 20:17-22

Mary, overjoyed to see Jesus alive, grabs hold of Him. His response is to tell her to let Him go. He is risen and must soon return to the Father. Mary tells the disciples that she's see Him alive and talked with Him. We're not told how the disciples responded to Mary. The story moves on quickly to present a scene where Jesus shows up unexpectedly in their midst even though the door to where they were was locked. He speaks peace to them. He shows them the bodily scars as proof of who He is. Apparently they are still dumbfounded so He says to them again, "Peace be with you." Again, as He did with Mary, he quickly moves on to the next part of the Father's plan. He tells them that as the Father had sent Him, He is now sending them. He breathes on them and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit.

They had thought that things had somehow gotten out of control and that Jesus was gone - the last three years of following Jesus and ministering with Him were all in vain. Jesus was dead and they had to start over without Him. Into the midst of their gathering He shows up, offers them peace, and tells them what they must now do. Most importantly, He tells them how to do what He is sending them to do. They must receive the Holy Spirit.

The message He spoke to them is the same message He speaks to us. Whatever you were doing, whoever you thought you were before Jesus showed Himself alive in your life, lay it all aside! He wants to send you! Maybe He will send you to some obscure place on the globe, or maybe you'll be asked to go no further than the corner drug store. Whenever He sends, receive the Holy Spirit; then move in the power of God.

²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." ²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:23-31

When Jesus tells His disciples that they will forgive people or hold them guilty of sin, He is not saying that God is giving them authority to determine right from wrong on their own. He had just told them to receive the Holy Spirit. He's actually confirming to them one of the things that the Spirit in them will accomplish. Jesus will not remain with them, but God is not abandoning them. Now, because of what Jesus has accomplished, God Himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit will indwell them. Now they will have an incredibly intimate access to the mind of God.

That access is ours as well. As we learn to hear and respond to Him, Jesus continues His work in the world through us. Truly, we are Christ's ambassadors.

Next, John tells the story of Thomas. All that Jesus has told them about His peace being with them and the moving of the Spirit in the world through them will take place only as they believe. Once more this theme comes to the surface in John's writing. When Jesus eventually does appear to Thomas, he believes. Importantly, John quotes Jesus here saying, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." The chapter closes by once more, emphasizing the importance of belief. It seems as though John thinks that he cannot overstate the importance of believing. Surely, the Spirit moved on John, prompting him to retell God's message to us, we must believe!

¹ After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. **John 21:1-7**

The last chapter of John's gospel is often subtitled "The restoration of Peter." As the story begins, Peter says he's going fishing. Two other disciples accompany him. They labored all night with no good result. At sunrise, Jesus appears on the shore but they don't recognize Him. Jesus asks how they've fared. When they tell Him they've caught nothing He tells them to cast on the other side of the boat. When they do, they catch an impossibly huge number of fish.

John realizes the man on the shore is Jesus Himself who has chosen to reveal Himself to them here by instantly reversing the results of their night's work. Peter was overjoyed to see the Lord again, and throws himself into the sea to reach Jesus' side as soon as he possible can. Peter's love for Jesus is apparent here. Though he is ashamed of his betrayal, here was the Savior He loved, and a new opportunity to confess and repent.

⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. ⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

John 21:8-14

When the other disciples reach shore with the boat they see that a fire has been prepared. They still have all the fish they've caught in their net, but they see that there are already fish on the fire and some bread. Perhaps Jesus is reminding them of the miracle told in John 6 where Jesus fed the crowd with more than 5,000 men having only two fish and five loaves of bread. In verse 12, we see that the disciples are still having a hard time coming to grips with the fact that Jesus is alive. After all, they'd seen Him die and everyone knows that death cannot be undone, can it? Jesus does not address their unspoken question. He merely let's His presence with them be their answer. He does the same for us today.

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me." John 21:15-19

Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, using the verb agapao – to love completely without degree. Peter answers, "Lord you know I love you." Peter uses the verb phileo – to love a friend. Peter had boasted of his great love before. Now he has seen his inability to love as Jesus is asking. Jesus tells him to feed His lambs. Jesus asks a second time, again using agapao. Peter answer again with phileo. Jesus tells him to shepherd His sheep. When Jesus asks the third time, He does not use agapao, rather He uses phileo as Peter did. It's as though Jesus is asking Peter, "Do you even really have this lesser form of love for Me?"

Peter, moved because Jesus has now asked three times and has changed the question by asking if Peter even has a lesser love for Him than He'd asked before, answers, "Lord, You know everything, You know that I love You." Again Peter uses phileo. Peter is struggling with the memory of how He'd deserted the Lord. He wants to be so much more that what he now knows he is. But now Jesus comforts him and tells him who he will become. When Jesus tells Peter in verse 18 that when he was young he dressed himself and went where he wanted, he's telling him that as a young man he did as he pleased. He had been foolish at times. When Jesus tells Peter that as an old man someone else will dress him and take him where he does not want to go, Jesus is predicting Peter's death. Tradition tells us that Peter, when he was crucified by Rome for his faith, asked to be crucified upside down because he did not think himself worthy to die the same sort of death as Jesus. Jesus is telling Peter that although he thinks his love for Jesus is only phileo, when Peter's time comes, Peter will demonstrate to the whole world and to himself that, by the grace of God, Peter's love for Jesus is more than phileo, rather it is agapao.

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" ²³ 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 remain until I come, what is that to you?" ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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. John 21:20-25

As the gospel ends, we see Peter asking Jesus about John. Jesus answers by telling Peter that he's asking the wrong question. We sometimes can become curious about things that really are not our concern. So, by way of answering Peter, Jesus tells him basically that he should only concern himself with the things that God will ask of him. Jesus is telling Peter to keep his mind on what the Spirit will ask him to do.

We often have these same tendencies. Jesus has restored us and paid the penalty that was due for our sin. Now, in loving response, let's keep our minds focused on how He is leading us, to accomplish His purposes through each of us individually. What Jesus may ask someone else to do is really not your issue or mine. Each of us must concern ourselves only with what He commands us.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. John 14:15