

The little girl was lying in her bed afraid. The storm outside rattled the windows which made her wonder what was under her bed which made her wonder what was in the closet and after her mind started racing, "Mom!" So mom comes in. "Sweetie, it's just a storm you're safe. I'm right here with you. And best of all, Jesus is here with you." That's beautiful comfort straight from the Bible! But the little girl said, "I want Jesus with skin on." She's saying, I know he's here; I know he's real. But I can't see him; I can't feel him, and I wish I could.

Have you ever felt that way? When life gets stormy you know Jesus promised to be with you. But you don't see Jesus. That's hard. And that's what Jesus' friends were about to face too. They had seen Jesus calm storms. They had seen him heal. They had seen him dominate demons. And they didn't know this, but he was about to leave them. He would leave them to go to the cross and die. Then he would leave them to go to his Father in heaven, and that would be hard.

It was the night before Jesus would leave his disciples and go to the cross when he said this: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

John 14:23-27

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

When life gets hard because we can't see Jesus, then **Jesus Gives Blessings to Believers.**

Before we can get into the blessings Jesus gives to believers, we need to deal with this first sentence. "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching." Because this is NOT meant to make you question your faith. It's meant to describe your faith. It's not, "If you really loved me you'd be better!" I say that because throughout John chapter 14 Jesus is comforting his disciples. This is Jesus kneeling at the bedside of a scared child. So for him to challenge his disciples' faith would be as silly as a mom saying, "I'm here, child. You're alright. I love you. And if you really loved me you'd behave a better!" No, no, no. This is Jesus describing his relationship with believers, that he loved us enough to come to this earth with us, to take all our sins on himself and die in our place. And some people, when they hear what Jesus did for them, they love him. So when Jesus describes believers he says, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching." Believers never obey Jesus perfectly. Our love for him is always a work in progress, but we do love him and we do listen to what he says.

Jesus is describing his relationship with believers when he promises these blessings, and that means these blessings are only for believers. Previously Jesus had said that after he was gone he would not show himself to the world but only his disciples. So one of the disciples asked, "Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to the us and not to the world?" The answer:

because after Jesus' body ascended into heaven, his influence, his comfort, his presence comes through his teachings. Anyone who loves Jesus, holds onto Jesus' teachings so they hold onto his comfort and his blessings too. He who does not love Jesus, will not hold onto his teachings and so they will not have his comfort or his blessings either. Martin Luther put it memorably: "A heart that keeps God's word has utter confidence over anything in the world because God is in him. A heart that does not keep God's word has utter fear of everything in the world because God is absent." So that's point number one. These blessings are for anyone who loves Jesus and if you're a Christian Jesus is talking about you.

We'll end up looking at three different blessings Jesus gives to believers, but one more point first. About one of his blessings Jesus said "I do not give to you as the world gives." He didn't say that after every blessing he described, but it's true about all of them. It's like there are two versions of each blessing, the world's version and Jesus' version. It's kind of like if you go to google image search and type in #nailedit. If you've never done this you are not living your fullest life yet! It's hilarious. So people see some beautiful artwork on the internet, it's usually some kind of pastry, and then they try to re-create it at home and when it goes terribly wrong the post it with the hashtag, #nailedit. So some professional makes these amazing cookies that look like cookie monster, and then a regular person tries it and gets this cookie monstrosity! That's like Jesus' blessings. Jesus offers us breath-taking blessings, and the world's version is like this. Ok. I see what you were going for, but that's not even close. Jesus says, "I do not give to you as the world gives."

But here's the problem: so often I crave the world's version of every blessing. When you compare these cookies, you can see both side by side. When you compare Jesus' blessings to the world's, you can see the world but you can't always see Jesus. It's like the little girl who wanted Jesus with skin on. The world's blessings come to us with skin on. It's not that we don't love Jesus. But when we can't see him, it's easy to prefer the world.

When I'm distracted by the comforts of this world, the cookie monster monstrosities of this world, as it were, then I need to see Jesus' version of the blessings. Remember how we get Jesus' blessings? By holding to his teachings. So let's hear what Jesus teaches us in John 14.

He says, I give you... I give you... I give you... First, I give you my father. **"My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."** The world has a version of this. It's family, friendship. And it truly is a blessing have family who knows the real you and still loves you. To have friends who will be there for you in the worst days. But if I try to make my human relationships the ultimate source of my comfort, they will shatter under the pressure. If my friendships are my ultimate comfort, I'll be dishonest to keep them. If my family are my highest comfort, I'll be crushed when they don't love me perfectly.

But Jesus does not give as the world gives. He promises that He and the Father will make their home in you. Your constant companion is the master of the universe. The one who knows more of your dark secrets than anyone in the world is the one who loves you more than anyone in the

world and he proved it when he gave up his son for you. No matter what your friendships or your family life, your Father loves you. Any time Satan tries to tell you otherwise, you hold on to Jesus' teaching.

Second, Jesus says, I give you the Holy Spirit to feed your faith. **"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."** The world has a version of that. It's called education and it is truly a blessing! My friend Kent, a fellow pastor, tweeted this a while back, "There are so many people! Even if they're all only twice as interesting as I, there's so much to learn." I haven't forgotten that because it is so true. Education can change your life and it can even help us spread the message of Jesus! But as good as that is, all the education in the world makes no difference when your brainwaves stop, and Kent knows that. That's why he's a pastor.

But Jesus does not give as the world gives. He promises that the Holy Spirit will teach you all things, that is all things that you need for eternal life. Jesus promised you that every time you open your Bible the Holy Spirit is there using God's word to teach you things that will make your jaw drop for all eternity. Jesus promised that you have a special tutor to help you the most important message in the world, the teachings of Jesus.

Finally, Jesus says, I give you my peace. **27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.** "Peace to you" was actually an everyday greeting at Jesus time. We say, "Hello." They said, "Peace to you." It was there way of saying "Hey I hope you have a good day. I hope your donkey doesn't die and you don't like fall in a hole or anything." But Jesus clarifies, "I'm not saying, 'Peace to you' like the rest of the world because the world thinks that peace is not having any trouble. To a poor man peace looks like wealth. To a sick man, peace looks like health. To a dying man peace looks like youth. The world says, "If only I didn't have this trouble, I'd have peace."

But Jesus does not give as the world gives. He actually told his disciples, "In this world you will have trouble. Your donkeys will die. You'll fall into holes. You'll be poor. You'll get sick. You will lose loved ones." But he has a peace that overcomes the world's troubles. You see, Jesus' message doesn't change your circumstances, it changes your heart. Jesus message tells you that even if everything in your world is crumbling, it's crumbling in the hand of the God who's holding you and loves you and has an eternal home for you. Luther said, "When you are sunk in affliction he so turns your mind from it and gives you such consolation that you imagine you are dwelling in a garden of roses." If that doesn't make any sense, it's because God himself called it "a peace that surpasses understanding." (Phil 4:7).

But let me try to illustrate it for you. The story goes, that there was a grand prize offered to whichever artist could paint the best picture of peace. The first artist drew a mountain lake. No wind. No wildlife. The surface of the lake like glass. Nature perfectly still. That is the world's definition of peace and if you've experienced times like that in your life, you know that it is a

tremendous blessing! Praise God. But the other artist took a different approach. He painted this. Roaring waterfalls. Tremendous noise. Turbulent waters. But if you look closely you can see a little bird at the center, in the middle of the chaos, sleeping. His picture is called: Peace in the Midst of the Storm. That is Jesus' peace, a heart at rest when the world is restless. #nailedit

So these are Jesus promises to disciples who are about to live without him. These are Jesus words to scared little girls on stormy nights. These are Jesus words to all believers. Even if we don't have Jesus with skin on—not yet—if we love him we have his teachings and then Jesus gives blessings to believers.

Amen.