



Sunday, June 27, 2021

Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor



Sermon #46 from the Gospel of John

“The Centerpiece of the Bible”

John 14:1-7 (King James Version)

The spirit of God is in the house today! A portion of this morning’s service was from Vacation Bible School that we’ve had every Wednesday this month—children singing and a moving, dramatic monologue of Mary Magdalene portrayed by Kaylee Mae Fulcher. Last Wednesday, June 23, twelve children came to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Praise God! Remember, Jesus took eleven men and changed the world. Clifford Baptist is going to send twelve out to change the world!

Today, we’ll be reading a portion of one of the primary chapters and verses of the Bible—John 14. Written by the old disciple John, these are words of a man who walked with Jesus through three years of ministry. He loved the Lord like no other. Fifty years before, when John was a young man, he saw the miracles of Jesus, heard the words of His sermons, saw the touch of Jesus upon multitudes of people. John himself saw Lazarus walk out of the tomb. John laid his head on Jesus’ chest in that Passover meal we just studied. John stood at the foot of Jesus’ cross. He inspected the empty tomb of Jesus the Christ. No man had a closer physical or spiritual walk with Jesus, the very Lamb of God walking the soil of the earth, than the old disciple John. Not only are these John’s words but they were selected and directed in his mind by the very spirit of God Almighty. It is His perfect Word! Praise God we get to study it today and carry it in our hearts this week as we go out in the world as representatives and witnesses.

The words in today’s passage are overwhelming to me. (Holding up his Bible): This Bible has been used in the pulpit for every sermon and used for every funeral since 2000. This page (today’s passage) is the dirtiest, most worn out, torn and taped page in my entire Bible in 21 years of usage. This portion of John 14 is so beautiful in our hearts; my prayer is that it’s not just beautiful in your Bible but in your mind as you serve the Savior. First, however, let me set the stage before we read today’s Scripture.

In John 13, Jesus shares the Passover meal with His disciples. From that gathering, He draws the Lord’s Supper. He also washes His disciples’ feet in a moment that humbles them to the core. Most of them were struck speechless by this act of God—on His knees performing this lowly task. The disciple, Simon Peter, tells Him He can’t wash just his feet; He needs to wash his entire body. He then gives them the shocking news there is a traitor among them; none of them knew who it was. Jesus dismissed Judas Iscariot into the night with darkness inside of him from Satan inhabiting his body. Judas Iscariot goes out to betray the Savior to the Roman authorities. With eleven men at the table, Jesus says “**Little children** (a term of endearment and sacrifice) **yet a little while I am with you. Shortly, I’m going away and where I’m going you cannot come.**” The disciples had no idea what was going to happen the next twelve hours. They knew nothing about the cross or His arrest. Even though they did not know they were going to witness Jesus, their Savior, on the cross tension and anxiety began to rise. Jesus is setting the stage that something is going to happen soon that will change their lives. Jesus wants them to share the humility of Him washing their feet with others. They had no idea what was weighing on His shoulders. They did not know what He

knew about the coming cross. Had they known, I feel sure they would have surrounded Him with prayer, support, and love. They didn't know the agony, the distress, the loneliness their Master would endure when God the Father would literally turn His back on His son as He bore the weight of sin on His own body. Only Jesus knew what was coming in the next twelve hours—that the world of His disciples would be shattered; He anticipates the pain they'll go through. Jesus, facing the cross, ministers to the men who will watch the cross. Jesus gives hope, peace, and blessing of what they will face rather than what He will face. Let's read now—never lose this page in your Bible, and may it get as worn out as mine.

¹Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. ⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way we know. ⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? ⁶Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. ⁷If ye had known me, he should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him.**" May God add His blessing to these seven verses as they take place in our hearts and minds because all of the Bible marches around this passage of Scripture.

As Jesus prepares His disciples for the next unknown twenty-four hours of His life, He says "Let not your heart be troubled." Notice "heart" is singular. The original Greek text reads: Let not be troubled of you the heart. It's like Jesus looks at each of His disciples in the face and tells them this—Peter, let not your heart be troubled; James—let not your heart be troubled, etc. He tells each one of them they'll experience a horrible, awful night tonight and a horrible day tomorrow. But, their heart does not need to be troubled. The Greek word for troubled is "taraśso" which means to be so overcome and destroyed by fear and anxiety you can't think of anything else—you get "eaten up" by it. It takes over your heart and mind. He tells them God the Father has a plan; He will never lose the reigns of control in what you're going to see. My Father is using Me to carry out a plan He has established from the beginning of the world. His plan is to provide forgiveness and a heavenly home for every single believer.

Read verse 2. I love the King James version of "mansions"—some translations say rooms or dwelling places. In Greek the word for mansions or rooms is "moné"—a place where we live, a manse, a home. It's not specified how fancy that home will be but it is not temporary. It's a forever home! Once we move there, we'll never move again. It's a home that will never fade away or get old; we'll never tire of it. It's the home of God the Father, and we'll have the privilege of living there. This is what Jesus is emphasizing to His disciples. In Revelation is a brief, magnificent description of heaven. I do believe it will be more beautiful than anything we have ever seen. If I am permitted to live in the house of God for all eternity, I'll be happy with a pup tent! The front window will face the throne of God. We'll be reminded why we live there—He paid the price on the cross through the tomb that we might have a home in heaven through His grace, forgiveness, and love. I think it's fitting that Jesus learned the trade of carpentry from His earthly Father, Joseph, when He was a young man. He says I personally will make you a home in heaven and prepare your place there. Your home and mine is under construction. When the last board is nailed and the paint is dry, He will take us home to live there forever. Read verse 3; I love Jesus' honesty here.

Remember, this is the night before the cross. Jesus tells His disciples whatever you see is God's plan to get you home in heaven. This applies to us—it's a true literal place. We're not going to be floating around on a cloud or playing a harp. 1 Peter describes heaven as a country; Hebrews, a city; John calls it our home. Revelation 22:3 says "...God's servants will serve Him." We're not going to sit around waiting for our angel wings—that's not true! We are His servants today and will be His servants forever! Now is a good time to be involved, invest your talent, give your energy and take on ministry because we're preparing for the home that is to come! Our service here will only be a continuation there. So, be busy! There are still positions in this church that need to be filled. Volunteer and link your talent where the need is. Jesus says to the disciples "Trust me; trust the Father because even as you see the cross, remember one day where I am there you will be also. We'll be home together." This is the promise of John 14.

Read verses 4-5. Jesus says you disciples will know where I am and also know how to get there; you'll come to Me when the time is right. Then Thomas, speaks up and voices the question all the other disciples are thinking—Where are you going and how will we get there? We often call Thomas the doubter but this is not a question of doubt; it's an honest statement, "Lord, we don't have it all figured out." Notice Jesus doesn't chastise him for that; He patiently moves on and tells Thomas about salvation and forgiveness in heaven. One of the most important verses in all the Bible is John 14:6. If you ever have an inclination to memorize Scripture, don't leave this out. All of the Bible marches around this verse; the rest of the Bible is worthless to you if you don't stake your life on John 14:6. Praise God for this passage! We stake our life, our church, outreach, sending missionaries to the world because of this verse. The world needs to know Jesus Christ as Savior. The Greek word for "way" is "hodos." Jesus Christ is the natural pathway, doorway, highway—the only way to know God the Father. The Greek word for "truth" is "aletheia." Truth undiluted, raw, the basis of life. Jesus cannot lie. The Greek word for "life" is "zoe"—the highest, absolute life. In Greek our few years on earth is "bios". Some of us live no more than twenty years; some live sixty, eighty, and beyond. What happens to "zoe"—the moment our earthly years stop? Jesus says if you know Me as the way, the truth, and the life your life will continue on for all eternity because you're going to live with Me in the Father's house. But—it's only through Me; there's no other way to get there.

Today's message is centered around seven little verses. I know it takes a long time to get through the Gospel of John, but I couldn't go any farther than these today. This passage is the heart of the Bible; I can't stress to you how important it is. It sums up the entire purpose and focus of the Word of God from Genesis through Revelation. It's about getting God's children home, and it's only through Jesus as Lord and Savior.

This past week I read an article about Bill and Melinda Gates. They're worth more than \$130 billion dollars. They have seven homes; the most beautiful one is worth \$130 million dollars. They own 242,000 acres of land and seven private planes. Money is not an object for anything they want. After 27 years of marriage, they are divorcing bringing about one of the greatest property divisions of all time. I don't have any personal knowledge of Bill Gates' relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, but I read a quote from him which gives a lot of evidence of what he believes: "We've raised our kids in a religious way. They have gone to the Catholic church that Melinda attends and I participate in. I've been very lucky, and I owe it to try and reduce the inequity in the world and that's kind of a religious belief. I mean, it's at least a moral belief. It

makes sense to believe in God, but exactly what decisions you make differently in life because of it I don't know." His words speak and scream to me of a lost man—not knowing Jesus Christ, not knowing the reason for living and the reason of life. He's losing some of his earthly property now to divorce but when his "bios" years are over, he's going to leave every single red penny behind!

When those years of eternity begin, the question will remain for every person "Did you know Jesus Christ and come to Him as the way, the truth, the life? Did you proclaim Him as Savior?" This will, in turn, affect what the rest of eternity will be for you. "Did you worship Him, come to Him? Did you give Him all that you had? Did you give Him your talents, your life, serve Him in ministry?" The great evangelist, Billy Sunday, said "The man who has no money is poor; the man who has nothing but money is poorer still." A life without Jesus is the worst poverty—it will be eternity in hell, according to the Bible. No matter how much or how little you have, your future eternity in the light of the Father's house or in the darkness of hell depends solely on your decision and relationship with Jesus Christ. There's no other way! Have you accepted Him as Savior? Most of us here today can say yes. But are you serving Him as Savior? Does your life belong to Him? This is not a question of do you know Jesus and then go about living your life the way you want or choose to or do you live your life as Jesus being your Savior in total submission and surrender to His will in your life. If His will is taking place in your life, you will be a minister, servant, representative, witness because you belong to Him. Every day we have is a day to be used for Him and not to be wasted. I pray, believers, we'll rededicate our lives to total surrender to the one we know as Savior, Master, and Lord.

Today, if you don't know Jesus as Savior your eternity can be put in place with two words—"I believe." I believe Jesus is the way, the truth, the life. I believe He went to the cross for me and rose from the grave to give me eternal life. I believe, Lord Jesus, that You gave Yourself for me. I believe You want me home with You one day. I know the only way to get there is through You; I give You my life. Every one of us needs to make that decision. I pray every one is bound for the Father's house before you leave here today.

Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank You for these precious moments. Should I die even before I walk from behind this pulpit out to the front, I know where I'm going to be. I know, Father, I'm going to be home—my room, my dwelling place, my mansion will be ready. I thank You that's the promise for every child of God. I pray we share this promise and surrender to the Savior that our life belongs to You. When we get to heaven, we just continue in service. I pray Your servants today will serve You. Father, for the one who needs You as Lord and Savior, I pray he or she will come and receive You—their eternity will be in place from a true and faithful decision for Jesus Christ. Thank You that You're a healing God. Bless us in these moments of decision. In Jesus' name. Amen.