



Sunday, July 11, 2021

Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor

Sermon #47 from the Gospel of John

“How to Accomplish God’s Will”

John 14:8-21 (King James Version)

Good morning and welcome to all worshipping with us in person or via media. We just sang “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” which assures us our God is faithful to us in every moment and every trial. For the life of the believer, our growth is to be faithful to Him. He is totally and always faithful to us. Our growth and walk as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is to first accept Him as Savior and then surrender our life to Him. God is pleased we’re growing in faithfulness in worship and service to Him.

As we continue studying the Gospel of John, I pray you are gathering and gleaning truth and personal growth points. I want you to understand John had a passion for this Book he wrote through the inspiration of God. The reason he wrote this Gospel, being guided by God as He pushed John’s pen along, was to bring the world to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. It’s still the purpose of our church, beginning right here in our community. We praise God for His allowing us to reach out to our country and our world.

To briefly recap this Chapter, Jesus is spending time with the disciples who have followed Him in ministry for three years. There are eleven now, because Judas Iscariot had been dismissed from the group. This is the Thursday night before Friday morning comes—the day of the cross. The Lord had shared the Passover meal with them and had bowed at their feet and washed them in an act of humility; this was done to teach them humility in honoring others. What we see in John 14 is Jesus preparing these men for His death and departure, but they don’t know it’s coming. He’s teaching them to stand on their own spiritual legs because Jesus Christ won’t be on the earth much longer. He’s preparing His disciples to take the baton of ministry, service, and preaching the Word and taking it into the world.

In the first part of Chapter 14, Thomas asked Jesus a very honest, direct question: “Lord, You’re telling us You’re going away but we don’t know exactly where, and we don’t know how to get there.” Jesus gives Thomas a very simple answer found in verse 6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Learn this passage so that you can say it by heart because all the Bible—from the Old Testament to the New Testament—marches around this one verse; it’s the centerpiece.

In today’s reading, Jesus and the disciples are still in the room where they celebrated Passover and where He washed their feet. The disciples are grappling with understanding what will happen in the days to come. It’s the eve of Good Friday and the cross; the greatest sole event in human history. They feel the tension and gravity that something huge is going to take place soon; they’re overwhelmed.

“⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹Jesus saith unto him, **Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?** ¹⁰**Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.**

¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.” Jesus is comforting His disciples in this very intense evening. He’s told them He’s going away; they don’t quite comprehend. He tells them it’s not time for them to come, but they’ll have a future ministry as He is physically absent from the earth. But He says one day you’ll come and be with Me. Jesus tells them He has a will, plan, and purpose for their lives. Philip speaks up and says “Show us the Father, and we’ll all be satisfied. How can we get to know God the Father better?” Jesus says “I’ve been with you three years yet You don’t realize when you know Me you know the Father. The Father and I are one. When you see the multitudes gather and hear the Word of God through Me, when I’m healing someone or preaching, you’re hearing the Father. The words I’ve spoken are words of the Father; you’re getting to know the Father every time you’re with Me.”

I call your attention to the word “know.” It appears 141 times in John’s Gospel, but it’s important to understand what it means in these verses. In the Greek language, “know” has four levels. The lowest level of “knowing” is to know a fact such as: It’s hot because it is summer. The second level is to know why that fact is true: It’s hot outside because the sun is closest to the earth during summer. The world lives on these two levels. The third level is on relationship—knowing someone or being related to them. The more you know a person and spend time with them the more you have an intimate relationship. The fourth level is when you know someone so deeply and intimately it changes your life. It affects you physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually; i.e., the level of husband and wife or knowing a brother or sister in the Lord Jesus Christ. This fourth level is the one we’re supposed to know Jesus on. When we come into that saving knowledge of Jesus and give Him our heart as Savior, then the rest of our life we have that intimate relationship with Him so we’ll know Him and surrender to Him fully. We know He’s totally faithful to us, so we need to build that relationship and be totally faithful to Him. Paul expresses this well in Philippians 3:9-10. He says I want to win Christ and be found in Him in faith that I may know Him. He says everything in my life is connected with what Jesus is leading me to do. This is our goal as well—our walk and journey of sanctification to totally surrender to Him as our Lord and Master. He’s taken over our life and rules our minds, spirits, actions. Do you strive for that type of relationship? There are many believers who have a very superficial relationship with Jesus and don’t strive to know Him deeply. Our goal is to have our footsteps laid by the Savior in front of us so that we follow Him, be obedient to Him, and surrender to Him—He is life itself!

¹²Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” Jesus says the day is going to come when My disciples are going to be able to accomplish great works in the Kingdom of God. He says after I’m physically gone from the earth My disciples will accomplish greater works than mine. Think of His life, ministry, and miracles; however, we can’t produce a miracle—only the Lord can! He means they’ll have greater works in quantity—to reach out to thousands of people that they may be saved and grow in the Good News of Jesus Christ. In our present era, Jesus says we’re going to be able to accomplish great ministry. We’re living in an age unlike any other—an age where the spoken word of Jesus Christ can go around the world in a second! In fact, that happens from this sanctuary right now! Isn’t that amazing?!

How will our church be able to do great ministry? To call millions in the world to Jesus Christ? He says we need to do three things—found in these next verses. Each is equally important. **¹³And whatsoever ye shall ask in my**

name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” So the first is prayer—asking God for the victory, the steps of ministry, communicating with God. Prayer is a call for us—how could you love someone with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and not communicate with them? True prayer is not a habit, a “magic potion,” nor a daily check mark on your calendar. It’s important to have that line of communication with Him twenty-four hours a day. He’s listening. God will answer prayers made through Jesus Christ because He loves it when we honor His Son.

The second way is found in verse 15: “**¹⁵If ye love me, keep my commandments.**” We’ll follow God’s Word, His commandments, His truth of the Bible to the very letter. We don’t mold it, massage it to fit where we are, or re-interpret it. Live this Word and follow it; it will never change! We respect and honor Scripture.

The third way to accomplish His ministry is: “**¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. ²⁰At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.**” When you and I accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and surrender our life, heart, and future to Him, Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit of God takes up permanent residence in us that very moment for the rest of eternity. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit of God two words: The “Comforter”—in Greek that’s “parakletos” and the “Spirit of truth” is “aletheia.” How does God give you and me comfort as believers? He’s comforted us throughout our lives. Has He taken away every hard situation? Has He taken away every one of your trials? Have you never had a hard day after accepting Him and accepting the Holy Spirit in your heart? No! He doesn’t comfort us by taking away the trials. He comforts us by promising He’ll walk with us through the trials! It’s His healing, strength, restoring for us as the Holy Spirit for our journey. Another translation calls the “Comforter” the “encourager.” He’s always building us up. When you’re going through your hardest days, the Lord God as the Spirit living in you is encouraging you “I’ll get you through this day. Take another step—I will strengthen you, bless you, use you for a purpose, and bring you through.” Many times, He uses hardship so we’ll focus on His strength and purpose.

I believe God has made us a better, healthier church because of the pandemic. That was a hard stretch of time; one of the most difficult and discouraging Sundays I experienced was preaching on Easter Sunday morning last year to an empty sanctuary. Yet, God has redefined and reshaped who we are as a church because of our time away from one another. He has multiplied our message to the world. We grew to understand He doesn’t have just a local ministry for us—that’s important—but the Lord transitioned us to a worldwide ministry. In some ways, we can say “Lord, thank you for a pandemic!”

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of truth.” God will never lead us to do anything outside of this word (holding up the Bible). This is His truth in written form. If we surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we will absolutely have the spirit in our hearts and the Bible in our hands. God’s spirit connects us together; it’s the glue of the church. There are all kinds of people in the church. We all have different talents, needs, walks of life.

The spirit of God living in us brings us together; we're the one body of Christ. The body is always open to new life and new believers as we join together with the Holy Spirit's guidance living in us—from this we'll have a cohesive ministry in the world. Think of this—God actually holds hands with Himself when we connect with one another. The Holy Spirit is our intimate connection and truly binds us together as the church. Read verse 18. As Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit here, it's always in the future. Remember, the Spirit is not given to the disciples yet—it comes on the birthday of the church in Acts Chapter 2. Once Jesus has ascended into heaven and the church is born, that's when the Holy Spirit is poured upon the church and believers to connect us together. Rest assured, we can accomplish amazing ministry through God's three gifts—each one is so absolutely important. We pray together, we live this word together, and we abide in the Spirit binding us together that we might do ministry together. Let's read the last verse:

21He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." This verse is filled with love—it's used four times. In this mutual relationship we have with one another and with Jesus Christ in love, we can change the world! One church in one little community is given the power of God and His leading to change lives through giving the message of a Savior who loves them, saves them, and will change their eternity. Jesus originally spoke these words to His disciples who were nothing more than common, everyday men—fishermen, laborers, tax collector. He transformed those eleven men to change the world. We're nothing more than a collection of common, everyday people, too. He's given us the call and ability to share the love of Jesus Christ and to literally change the world. I believe we need to be open to how God wants to use us in the "big picture." Yes, we're a local ministry and yes, we're to reach our community but we're given quite a blessing to reach the world. We teach, preach, and model Jesus Christ and as we do as the body of Christ, He will bless us, favor us, and use us to share that Gospel. We have the most unique opportunity in the world right now. The world is much smaller than it used to be, and we can share that message with so many people in so many places. I pray we'll seize this opportunity and use it. I pray we'll seek Him in prayer and study in the Holy Spirit to be His church in this time. God bless you and me through His spirit binding us together.

If you're here today and have never come to Jesus as your Lord and Savior, know that He loves you! Out of all the billions of people on this earth, He's concentrating on you right now! He is sending you a message: "I went to the cross for you; My body was broken and My blood was shed for you. I took your place of punishment there. If you acknowledge before Me that you're a sinner and need forgiveness, come and say Lord Jesus, I believe you took my place on the cross and rose from the grave on the third day that I might have life everlasting." He wants to hear you say you believe Him, love Him, and accept Him.

Let us Pray: Father God, thank You for these precious moments. I pray You will continue to bind our church together, Lord. We've been through hard days and challenges, but I believe as a result of that You've sharpened our passion and our desire to reach people. I pray, Lord, in this unique moment of history that we'll use Your gift of communication to reach the world for Jesus. Bless us as a church that we will rededicate our lives to You as a church body. If there's one who needs Jesus as Savior, he or she simply needs to come today and say "Lord, I love You, I believe You, I accept You." In Jesus' name, Amen.