

## Read Isaiah 55:11-12 - Pray

### Intro - Open to John 16:25-33

Jesus is closing out his teaching ministry to his disciples, and more specifically the needed comfort and care he began in chapter 14. He will summarize and punctuate with great confidence of what His ministry has been to them and what it will be after his resurrection and ascension.

In the course of these closing remarks, he has constantly referenced his leaving, making the disciples concerned and even prone to despair. They are longing to know what he is talking about but without the Holy Spirit's help or even the experience of the crucifixion and resurrection, they cannot begin to grasp it.

So Jesus leaves them with two major truths which surround their immature faith. He affirms the truth of God's overwhelming love, responds to their underwhelming faith, and wraps up all he has taught them with his Overwhelming Victory! So write this down: **God's love and conquering Christ overwhelm even the most uncertain days.**

## One – Overwhelming Love

### Read John 16:25-28

Jesus is continuing his discussion of prayer that he began in our text last week. The phrase figurative language is referencing the birth metaphor from last week and the many times that Jesus spoke of his death and resurrection which were simply incomprehensible to the disciples. Although figurative language are descriptive things like similes and metaphors, Jesus is more focused on the obscurity of the language and the disciples ability to comprehend. But that time, that hour is coming, where he will speak plainly.

This time is after his resurrection. Jesus rises from the grave on Easter Sunday and appears to his disciples for 40 days. Teaching them many things that after his atoning death for sin, and his resurrection which put to rest any hint of worry about what awaited the disciples, they will then be able to understand.

This leads Jesus to explain in verse 26 that they again, will pray in Jesus' name, through their knowledge of his work on the cross, and it will not be a type of intercession where they do not have access to the Father. Jesus clarifies that his intercessory work after his ascension is not one of telephone operator or receptionist frantically taking down prayers and bringing them to God. Instead, in Christ's name, because we are brought near to the Father, we can pray directly to him.

In our world today many leaders, even busy pastors must by the nature of their public office put a buffer between them and those who want to access them. Social media has tried to break down that barrier a bit, but many leaders do not even allow uninterrupted access to themselves.

The Father, the creator and sustainer of heaven and earth, does not carry the limitations to mortal men. He has no schedule in which to keep, he does not have meetings to be interrupted, he doesn't have to pause the television or turn off the sink to hear your request. He simply, hears the prayers of the saints who offer them in the name, on the basis of his Son's death, to bring their unclean lips to him.

Why would God give us this access? Or more foundationally, why would Christ come to die to give us this access? Verse 27 says, **for the Father Himself loves you**. This is not the general love that God has for his creatures or creation, this is the special love that is tied up into his divine will for salvation and reconciliation for the whole world. As the text continues, **“because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father”**. His love, his access granting, salvation securing, Jesus sending love, comes to the ones who love Christ and believe he is who he claims, One with the Father and coming from the Father.

Verse 28 seems like a pithy statement. From the Father to the world and from the world to the Father. Here we find deep truths of God the Son. The **pre-existence, incarnation, humiliation and exaltation** of Jesus. Since he came forth from the Father, this means that he **existed** before he was born and was with the Father in eternity past. He then comes into the world where he takes on flesh as the God-man in the **incarnation**. He then leaves the world, this is the crucifixion, his great act of redemption but it is called the **humiliation** because God submits to death. God cannot die, unless by his taking on flesh, he dies and takes off human flesh. And lastly, he goes back to the Father, where he will be **exalted** above every name and reign now and forever on the throne in heaven and someday again on earth.

This is the overwhelming love of God that he would make a way for humanity. Jesus was helping his disciples see that the greatness of his plans, the greatness of the Father is beyond our human ability but because he loves us, he will humble himself, even as Philippians 2 says, to the point of death so that we might experience his love. His redeeming love where we will love his Son and believe in him for eternal life. It's simply overwhelming the depth of it, so much so that the disciples, without the aid of the Holy Spirit only can speak of the facts but cannot see the depths. Let's look at their response. A response of Underwhelming Faith

## Two – Underwhelming Faith

Read John 16:29-32

The disciples offer a faithful response to Jesus but we first notice they misunderstand the timing. They assume that the time Jesus is speaking plainly is now, not coming soon as Jesus said. They affirm important truths about Jesus in verse 30. His divine knowledge, his authority beyond question, and they affirm their belief that Jesus comes from God the Father. But this is where Jesus' divine knowledge gets them.

Jesus answers **“Do you now believe?”**. This question isn't demanding an answer but as Jesus continues, it shows that his question is not affirmation of their faith but ironic to show their immaturity. This becomes clear in Jesus' prediction in verse 32,

**Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.**

Their faith will be tested. In this moment, it will fail. They will be scattered, quoting Zechariah 13:7 just like Mark 14:27 and Matthew 26:31, where the disciples clearly are recording in their gospel accounts that their scattering between Jesus' arrest and his resurrection is connected to the same Israelite failures of generations past.

The genius of God's plans in building his church is that by using discredited failures and uneducated nobodies, God is all the more glorified as they are transformed into courageous defenders of truth not by their own strength or authority but on the grace and goodness of the God. God who brings life where there was only death. A harvest where there was only drought. Mature faith where there were only immature regurgitated statements. As many of you have noticed, my son Jude is a talker. We are grateful for his words as it can sometimes help us talk through things when he is upset. But he still has much to learn, many words to learn. So sometimes I will ask him to repeat a word I know that he will not be able to understand. I asked him to say “Onomatopoeia” a few times. And he would repeat it back to me! He can't comprehend that it is a word which describes sounds. Or that Onomatopoeia is the whole premise of the old batman comics and movies. Ker-chow, oomph, womp the Joker and Mr. Penguin.

The disciples were able to articulate their faith but their maturity had not yet come. They could repeat the words back to Christ but were far from understanding its meaning or the ability to act upon them. The Holy Spirit and the death and resurrection of Jesus has not come.

We might begin to think about our faith. It is not about what truths we can regurgitate. It is not even about the actions that we do. Peter will be willing to stand and cut off an ear rather than scatter at Jesus' arrest but he is not acting in faith, he is acting in his own idea of what is right.

Jesus is setting them up for victory! In their defeat, in their scattering, in their immature faith, Jesus will bring out a victory, overwhelming victory.

## Three – Overwhelming Victory

Read John 16:33

The last four chapters are the things he has spoken to them about his betrayal, death and resurrection. He has spoken things about his coming Holy Spirit and the opposition of the world through persecution. Think about the low points the disciples are about to experience. Not only is their faith about to be proven insufficient, their hope for Israel's freedom from Roman oppression about to evaporate, their community of 3 years about to dissolve, but their God is about to die.

The great theme of reversal is back from last week. Sorrow turns to joy not just because Jesus raises from the dead, but because he has died, they are saved. The moment of crushing defeat is flipped entirely into victory.

Jesus says in Him you have peace, in the world you have tribulation. This verse is a bulwark to Ukrainian Christians today. Missionaries and Pastors have stayed in Ukraine to pastor and minister in war because they have peace in Christ. The world currently has bombs and tanks and invading ships but they can take courage.

The word for overcome in the Greek, nikao from the noun nike, a word we recognize because its Americanized logo is emblazoned on our socks, is a word from war. To overcome, to conquer, to have victory over your enemy. It looks forward to our conquering king returning in Revelation 6:2 **I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.** nikao

There have been great military reversals in history. But just considering our own nations' history consider the upstart Continental army pushing back British forces at Freeman's Farm and Saratoga in 1777. This was the spark for France officially becoming America's ally and being critical in American Independence. Or the Battle of Gettysburg where Confederate troops had the upper hand but Union forces emerged victorious after three days of fighting between June 1 and June 3, 1863.

What could be more vital for the disciples to know than the battle has been won? That Jesus is not just the possible victor over sin and death but even in the hours before his death, he claimed and was perfectly confident that he has already won. He would allow complete defeat to seem clear. Not just being reduced to the last regiment but being completely buried before the supernatural reversal out of the grave.

Jesus' words here speak not to a narrow come from behind, one point victory. It speaks to the overwhelming victory over the whole world of opposition. Roman and religious persecution stand for nothing compared to the king who rises from the dead. For the apostles who can have courage that their deaths are nothing when resurrection is guaranteed.

## Conclusion

Loved ones, we serve the loving king who conquers. He overwhelms not with sword and spear but with sacrificial love and resurrection. He does not turn back the worst of sinners. He does not reject any that come to him. He does not relent when our hearts are hard, he overwhelms and overcomes and transforms weak faith into maturity.

I want you to take stock of your faith this morning. What is your faith in? Now as Christians we want to confirm that our faith is in Christ. That his death, burial and resurrection is our hope and our salvation. But I want you to consider the immature faith of the disciples and make yourself certain this morning that your faith is not in your own words. That your faith is not mired in immaturity of regeneration but is deepened by trust in Him.

If your faith is in a prayer you have prayed or in attendance here this morning or some deeds you have done, when persecution or trials come, your faith may prove to be immature or not real at all.

The distinction is this: faith in yourself or faith in Christ. You will fail, like the disciples did. They had every chance to receive the best teaching, they had the best access to God, they had the best opportunity to see the truth, but because their immature faith was in Christ it would be swallowed up in victory.

Judas, the traitor, would profess faith. He was sent out by Jesus to cast out demons and teach about Christ, but his faith was not true. We see current day examples of Christian leaders, authors, musicians whose faith is tested and instead of enduring it has been undone. Their faith may have been in the words they spoke, or their acts of obedience. But true abiding faith in Christ will persevere to the end. It will not be overcome. True faith in Christ, is faith in an overwhelming victorious king over our sin and our fleshly desires and our fickle faith.

The disciples, up until this point have an immaturity to their faith, but when their faith is tested, when Jesus' resurrection comes their faith would have found its sure footing.

Like the disciples, the testing of your faith, if it is genuine will produce perseverance.

James 1:2-4

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Will you be overwhelmed this morning by the love of God? That he would send his son to die for you? That he would endure the cross to pay the penalty for your sins?

Will you be overwhelmed by his victory over this world? Will you have courage because of him, in the midst of war? He wants to give you peace and courage. Let the testing of your faith during uncertain days, show its quality. He has overcome roman armies and corrupt governments and corrupt religious leaders. He overcomes the abandonment of his disciples to mature their faith through it. **God's love and conquering Christ overwhelm even the most uncertain days.**