

Comfort for Troubled Hearts

JOHN 14:1-6 • PART 3: RETURN & REUNION

Baxter T. Exum (#1644)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
May 29, 2022



It is a great blessing to be together this morning! Please remember that we will be partaking of the Lord's Supper right after our study of God's word; the elements are available on the table in the entryway. And if you are visiting with us, we invite you to fill out a visitor card online at the address on the wall up here, which is also found on the bulletin board and in today's bulletin – fourlakescoc.org/visitor.

This Saturday, we have the opportunity to honor and remember Al Ovadal. Al loved this congregation and served this church faithfully from the very beginning. We plan on meeting here at 1 o'clock Saturday afternoon to visit and to share some food together. If you can help with that, please sign up on the bulletin board today. Following that hour of fellowship, we will have a memorial service at 2 o'clock, and all of us are encouraged to be here for that as we encourage Juanita and the rest of Al's family.

We are starting our study of God's word this morning with the reminder that God loves us, and he has provided a way for all of us to be saved, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. We respond to this good news by believing it, by turning away from sin, by confessing our faith publicly, and by obeying the Lord's command to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. This is the point at which our sins are covered by his blood, and we are born into God's family.

The pictures on the wall come to us from the Northwest congregation in Fort Worth, Texas. A week or so ago, they say that "The angels rejoice as Brianna and Brooklyn Haynes both put on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27) to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:3-5) and to have their sins washed away (Acts 22:16)!!!!" The pictures look like they might have been taken with a potato camera, but I am getting the idea that Brianna and Brooklyn might be sisters. But whatever the case may be, they are definitely sisters now. We are so thankful for their decision to obey the gospel.

And then we also have a neat picture from Silverio Entroso in the Philippines. He says that "This picture was taken today, May 22, 2022, when we baptized two precious souls into Christ after our worship service at Butadon church of Christ, Kapatagan, Lanao Del Norte. These two sisters were members before of the "LAST MESSAGE CHURCH." They were Sister Jolinda Dumilin and Sister Jennifer Mendoza." So, this week it appears that we have two sets of sisters who are now truly sisters in every sense of the word – from Texas and from the

Philippines. And if you are interested in following their example, I would invite you to pull me aside after worship today, and we would love to open the word of God with you.

Over the past few weeks, we have been looking at a series of comforting statements in John 14:1-6. We are thinking back to the night in which Jesus was betrayed. Jesus and the apostles had just eaten the Last Supper, and the disciples' hearts are troubled. I say this, because Jesus starts John 14 by saying, ***"Let not your heart be troubled,"*** and as we noted several weeks ago, he's basically saying, ***"Stop it! Stop being so stirred up in your hearts."*** And then he goes on to give a series of encouraging or comforting statements, statements that are intended to calm their hearts.

He starts in verse 1 with the command, the encouragement, the invitation to ***"Believe in God, believe also in Me."*** When our hearts are stirred up, Jesus reminds us to put our faith in him. We study his word, we spend time with his people, we put our faith in him, and Jesus has a way of calming our hearts.

Last week, we moved along to verse 2, where Jesus promises a prepared place for a prepared people, ***"In My Father's house are many dwelling places,"*** he says, ***"if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you."*** Last week, by way of encouragement, we looked at the place he promises, and then we looked at Jesus' promise to prepare this place.

This morning, let's return to John 14:1-6. We will look at the passage again, and then I'd like for us to spend some time looking at a third comforting statement in this passage. This is John 14:1-6, where Jesus says,

¹ "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do 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 but through Me.

This morning, I'd like for us to focus in on a third comforting statement, and this one is found in verse 3, as Jesus promises a RETURN and a REUNION. And this will be our emphasis this morning – we will take a few moments to think about the Lord's RETURN, followed by Jesus taking us home to be REUNITED with him.

- I. **But first of all, as allow ourselves to be comforted by this, let's take a moment to think about the fact that Jesus has promised to RETURN.**

Remember: In verse 2, and also at the beginning of verse 3, Jesus says that he is about to ***"go"*** somewhere. He says that he is about to ***"go"*** to ***"prepare a place"*** for these people. And based on what we learned from the previous chapter, the disciples are concerned about this. They don't want Jesus to ***"go."*** The promise here, though, is that if he leaves, he will also RETURN, ***"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again...."*** The separation, then, would not be permanent, but temporary. Jesus will ***"come again."*** A few weeks later, after his resurrection, Jesus speaks to his disciples again (in Acts 1), and in Acts 1:9, after he had spoken to them one last time, ***"...He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them."*** And these men then said, ***"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."***

And today, we wait. We don't know the day or the time when he will return, but we do know that he is coming back, and so we wait. The author of Hebrews mentions this in Hebrews 9:27-28, where he says that **"...inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."** Jesus, then, **"will appear a second time."** This is what we refer to as his **"second coming."** He will **"come again."**

And then, in 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul specifically ties the Lord's return to this idea of being comforted.

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

II. And this is where we transition from the Lord's RETURN to this REUNION.

In this passage we just read from 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul certainly tells us that the Lord is coming back for us, but the most important part of this passage, the climax of that passage comes in verse 17, where he says that we will **"meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."** That's what his Second Coming is all about – it's not primarily about walking on a street of gold, or entering the city through gates of pearl, but the main point of the Second Coming is that **"we shall always be with the Lord."** And this is when he says, **"Therefore comfort one another with these words."** What words? **"...and so we shall always be with the Lord."** When Jesus RETURNS, the point is: We will enjoy an eternal REUNION. It's not the place so much as the people. Jesus is coming back, not just for the sake of coming back, but he is coming back so that we can be with him.

Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus wants us to be with him? It feels good to be wanted, doesn't it? Maybe I've missed something, but I get the impression that my wife likes having me around. I get the impression that my kids appreciate being with me. I know without a doubt that my dog likes having me around! When I leave, I get the feeling that she's worried that I may never come back. I head for the door, and there's a bit of panic in her eyes, "Oh no! The man is leaving! How will I eat when he is gone? This is a terrible thing!" I leave, and when I come back, it seems as if my return is the best thing that has ever happened in her life. Sometimes we talk about being worried that our dog might wag herself in half. She is so excited when we come home, we are a bit worried she might injure herself in the excitement.

Well, maybe in some similar way, we also need to be looking forward to the reunion Jesus refers to in John 14:3. This reunion is truly one of the most comforting things we could ever imagine. And what's awesome is: Jesus seems to look forward to this reunion just as much as we do! **"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."** He mentions this a few chapters later, in John 17:24, as he prays and says, **"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."** Jesus **"desires"** to be with us. Jesus wants this reunion just as much as we do. And this is truly comforting. The writer of Hebrews refers to this reunion in Hebrews 12:22-24, when he says, **"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of**

angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant..." When our hearts are troubled, one reminder that may bring us comfort is that we are headed for a reunion with the Lord.

He is coming back, and he is coming back for us, so that we can be together.

Conclusion:

This morning, we have looked at the Lord's RETURN and the REUNION that will take place when he does return. When our hearts are troubled, the Lord says, first of all, in this passage, **"Believe in Me."** He then gives the reminder that he has prepared a place for us. And today we have looked at Jesus' promise to return so that we can be together throughout all eternity. "We shall see the King someday," as we sometime sing.

I'm looking forward to coming back to this passage next week, if the Lord wills, as we continue looking at Jesus' advice for bringing comfort to troubled hearts. For the rest of our time together today, we will be singing songs about this reunion that the Lord is planning for us.

Before we continue with singing and the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the one and only awesome God. You sent your Son to this earth to save us, and we praise you this morning as a God who loves us. Your Son has promised to return for us, and we are looking forward to that great reunion. Father, we ask that we would always be ready for your Son's return.

As we live on this earth for a relatively short time, we pray that we would encourage each other with these words of comfort that you have given to us.

We've seen, yet again this week, that this world can be a place of unspeakable pain, and suffering, and loss. We pray for comfort for the families who have suffered loss. We pray for justice. We pray for the courage to protect.

We come to you in the name of your son Jesus. Thank you, Father, for hearing our prayer. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: foullakeschurch@gmail.com