

John 14:15-31: Biblical Reading and Reflections

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 October 2020

Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0 : 00] John chapter 14 verses 15 to 31. Because I live, you also will live.

In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

Judas, not Iscariot, said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered him, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, I am going away, and I will come to you.

[1 : 38] If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe.

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Rise. Let us go from here. The second half of John chapter 14 continues the theme of Jesus' coming. Jesus is responding to the anxiety of his disciples, as he has told them that he is going away.

However, he is also addressing the reality of the church afterwards, the fact that we do not have Christ physically present with us. How is it that we can relate to a Christ who seems absent from us?

Christ responds to this by speaking of a fourfold coming. We can think about his coming in the resurrection, his coming at Pentecost, his coming in specific acts of power and presence within the history of the church, and then his coming on the final day to take his people to himself.

[2 : 43] Jesus speaks about all of these as ways in which he is going to be with and near his disciples, even after he has physically left and gone to his Father. In verses 16 and 17, he speaks about the gift of the Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit will be a way in which Jesus communicates his presence to his disciples. The Spirit will be one who calls alongside, to translate the term more literally, or someone who is a helper or a friend or a comforter or an encourager or an advocate.

All of these could be interpretations of the term that is used here. He is the Spirit of truth. Themes of witness pervade John's Gospel, and the truth of the witness born by the Spirit is given prominence. Christ bears witness, John the Baptist bears witness, and now the Spirit of truth will bear witness. The truth will not be received by the word, as the Spirit will not be received by the world.

The world neither sees nor knows the Spirit. Earlier on we have been told that the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes, and that so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

[3 : 49] The Spirit and those born of the Spirit will not truly be recognised by the world, but yet the disciples know the Spirit. The Spirit dwells with them at that moment, as he dwells with them in Christ.

Later on, as a result of Pentecost, he will be in them, empowering them and also giving them a sense of Christ's presence. Christ assures them that he will not leave them as orphans, he himself will come to them.

They are going to experience his absence in a very keen way in a few days' time, as he will be in the tomb and they will feel bereft of him. They will initially have no hope, and yet he will return to them.

Although the world will not see him, they will see him, and because he lives, they will live. Because of his resurrection, they will be resurrected, and in that day they will know that Christ is in the Father.

They will have an assurance of Christ's relationship with the Lord and the Giver of life, his Father, and they will also be assured in that moment of their relationship with Christ. Not just that Christ is the true image of the Father and the word of the Father, but also that they are connected with him. [4 : 54] In verse 15, Jesus spoke of those who loved him keeping his commandments. In verse 21, he speaks of the same thing. This connection between love and keeping the commandments of Christ is an important one, which John especially explores in his first epistle.

When we look through the Gospel of John, we will have a clearer sense of what the commandments involve. First of all, Christ commands his disciples to receive and believe what he gives them, and then he calls them to love one another.

The keeping of the commandments then refers to these two things, to believing in him and to loving each other. As they believe and receive Christ and love each other, it will be a manifestation of the fact that they love Christ.

In John's first epistle, John talks at great length about how we know that we know Christ as we keep his commandments. Judas, not Iscariot, asked Christ how it would be that he would manifest himself to his disciples but not to the world.

And in his answer, Jesus teaches that he and his Father will come to the one that loves him and keeps his word, and that it will be in that person that this presence is particularly known.

[6 : 14] Jesus has already spoken about the Spirit being given to the disciples as a whole, but here there seems to be more of an individual emphasis. When the Spirit comes, whom the Father will send in Christ's name, he will teach the disciples all things that they need to know, so that they will be made aware of everything that they need to know.

This may be a reference primarily to the apostles, rather than to disciples in general. The apostles will spread their inspired teachings to the rest of the church, so that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

At the conclusion of this chapter, Jesus returns to the theme with which he began it. At the beginning, he told his disciples not to let their hearts be troubled, and now he gives them his peace, and assures them once again that their hearts should not be troubled, that they should not be afraid.

He is assuring them that he is going away, but that he will return to them in these various ways. If they love him, they will rejoice, because he is going to his Father, and his Father will give him all authority, and will send the Spirit in his name.

Consequently, it is much better for them, and for him, that he goes. He tells them these things before they take place, so that when they do take place, they will not be afraid, but also so that they will have proof of his words, in order that they might believe.

[7 : 33] As if interrupting a conversation to look at a clock, to be reminded of an imminent appointment, Jesus tells his disciples that he cannot talk much longer with them, because the ruler of this world is coming.

Satan, however, has no claim upon Christ. Christ does as the Father has commanded him, and so Satan has no purchase upon him. Satan can't ultimately defeat him.

He can't hold on to him. And as Christ does what the Father has commanded, the world will know that he loves the Father. This is the example that we should follow, as we do what Christ has commanded, so that it will be known to all that we love him.

A question to consider. Why is it a benefit for the church that Christ leaves after the resurrection?