

“With Jesus in the Upper Room - Lesson #3: What We (You) Believe Matters”

Scripture: John 14:1-14

Graphics: last supper table, Jesus, chalice, towel, basin

Big Truth: The last moments of Jesus’ earthly relationship with the disciples were in the Upper Room around a table, eating a meal together. Those last moments were Jesus’ opportunity to give the most important lessons he wanted them to know and follow. The people of the Panama UMC are called to sit with Jesus and learn the lessons he taught in order to be the disciples Jesus wants us to be.

Focus Phrase: I believe in God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and I believe Jesus is the Way to a disciples’ life.

1. Introduction

- A. Before Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem on the last week of his earthly life, Jesus had told his disciples multiple times that he was going to die.
 - i. In Matthew 16:21 we read these words, “From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”
 - ii. In Matthew 17, “When they came together in Galilee, [Jesus] said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.”
 - iii. In Matthew 20, “Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified.”
 - iv. In John 12:23-24, Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”
- B. (table) When the disciples then got to eat with Jesus at a Supper around this table, he knew - and they SHOULD HAVE KNOWN - that it was his last meal with them before he would indeed die on the cross.
- C. If they understood that, then they would’ve known that the words Jesus was saying were his last. They would’ve known that these lessons were the most important ones.
- D. Jesus’ last words were critical to knowing what they were supposed to do next...and as importantly, know what they were supposed to believe about it all, especially after Jesus went away.

- E. Last words are important. It's one reason we put last words on grave markers. It's the reason a quick search of the internet will yield the dying words of famous people and not-so-famous ones.
- F. The words that Jesus spoke on THIS night with US gathered around that table, are important. They are also what he wanted US to do...what he wanted US to believe in order to continue in ministry, be confident in our mission, and be ready to join Jesus one day when he returns.
- G. Lesson #1 at this table was The Service of Love...to know what it's like to be loved by Jesus, intimately. Which leads to Lesson #2 - the Love of Service... to passionately love others by intentionally being second chair...by entering into a lifestyle of foot washing.
- H. And these two lessons require that we look beyond whether someone is a Christian or not...look beyond whether they act or live like we live. These final lessons from Jesus are for us to apply in our lives without regard to age, race, gender, income, location, or any other factor. **We are to be loved.** *Check. We are to love. Check.*
- I. And, around that table, at the end of John 13, Jesus again told the disciples that he was going away and they couldn't follow him yet. Which, of course, caused all kinds of anxiety in the disciples.
- J. So, that's when Jesus began Lesson #3, which is: What You Believe Matters. We are loved. We love. And when we love, what is it that we must believe that will inspire the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? But not just the whole set of things that we believe, but the most important beliefs that Jesus was highlighting with his holy highlighter.
- K. So, today, let's go back to the table with Jesus...let's go back to school to learn Jesus' next lesson.
- L. Ready? READY!? Let's pray!
- M. PRAY!**
- N. Lesson #3 is found in John 14:1-14. What You Believe Matters, says Jesus. Let's get our bibles open and be spongey...soaking up the Word. We're going to break this into 4 sections today, starting with verses 1-3. Let's read!

2. Scripture

A. READ John 14:1-3

- i. In order for the disciples to carry on after Jesus was gone, he knew they needed to be encouraged. I mean, Jesus told them he was going to die. And, hearing the news that someone is going to die is probably one of the most discouraging things we could hear...we've all been there.

- ii. Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” That word *troubled* in the Greek means *to be distressed or agitated*. It’s not just a concern, but a pretty harsh emotion...something that is out of their control.
- iii. But Jesus has the answer to their distress...which is FAITH. Faith is the foundation for hope, joy, and courage no matter what happens in life.
- iv. “Believe in God, believe also in me.” Some translations say, “You believe in God, believe in me.” You believe in what God is doing. You believe in what God has said. So, believe in ME.
- v. In short, believe in the REALITY of God - Father and Son and Holy Spirit, three in One. Believe that God exists - that God has a new reality for you. And, Jesus was saying, that he was one with God, so faith in HIM follows.
- vi. The first part of that reality of God is that THIS WORLD is not all there is! Jesus said there’s more...there’s something more than this earthly existence.
- vii. There you are at the table, discouraged. Yet, in this moment, Jesus gave us a vision of an alternate reality that destroys our discouragement.
- viii. That vision is hard to name and describe, but we call it ‘heaven,’ mostly.
- ix. Jesus never describes heaven as a physical PLACE so much as a physical PRESENCE. The Jewish culture had to put some kind of spacial indicator on the concept of heaven, so they said heaven is UP and hell is DOWN. God is THERE, and we are HERE.
- x. Yet, Jesus simply says that there’s a reality in which God has provided a way for us to be in His presence together, forever. And short of saying it’s a place we go to, we simply believe that God desires for us to be WITH him.
- xi. Jesus said, “I’m going to be with the Father...and you TOO will be going to be with the Father...I’ll come back to get you.”
- xii. So, Lessons 3.A, if you will is: **Believe that - through faith in Jesus - you will be in the presence of God after Jesus returns.**
- xiii. Let’s look at the second part of the lesson - **believe in the Way to get to that presence...**verse 4.

B. READ John 14:4-6

- i. How do we get to be with God? Jesus makes it clear that the Way to get to the presence of God is through a personal relationship with God’s Son, Jesus Christ.
- ii. This has been, is, and will continue to be the core belief and proclamation of the Christian Church. Jesus’ encouragement to the disciples was that even though he was leaving, because they KNOW HIM, they have the pathway to the everlasting presence of God.

- iii. This was critical for them to know because after Jesus died and rose again, the disciples were to carrying the mission...to BE Christ's presence in the world. And it wasn't going to be easy.
- iv. I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. No one comes to the presence of the Father unless they come to the Father by way of a relationship with me, said Jesus.
- v. So, believe there you'll be in the Presence of God and believe in the WAY to get to the everlasting presence of God.
- vi. Verse 7 gives us another part...believe that Jesus is God...and God is Jesus.

C. READ John 14:7-11

- i. The disciples (and specifically Phillip) wanted, desperately, to see the Father because Jesus wasn't going to be there. And they still weren't getting it. Without Jesus, they thought they needed SOMEONE to connect to...and as Jews, the Father was God.
- ii. To which Jesus simply said that they didn't need to see the Father because Jesus himself is the perfect representation of the Father. Everything Jesus knows and says, is what the Father knows and says. See Jesus? See the Father.
- iii. So, believe that HE is God and that God is He. That Jesus and the Father are ONE...
- iv. Jesus knew that that was a challenging concept for them...so he added that if they still were working on believing that, simply because Jesus said it, then in the meantime, look at the miracles, and signs, and wonders, and forgiven sin, and healed bodies...let THAT be the first step to faith that Jesus is God and God is Jesus.
- v. There's more to this life...Jesus is the Way to the Presence of God... because God is Jesus. Those are the CORE beliefs that matter.
- vi. Finally, Jesus got to the mission. Because you believe that there's a presence to which you will be taken...because you believe that Jesus is the way to that presence...and because Jesus is God and God is Jesus, AND because YOU'RE STILL ALIVE ON THIS EARTH right now, then let your faith compel you into mission. Verse 12...

D. READ John 14:12-14

- i. Two things to learn from this last section: 1) Faith leads to action and 2) Action is what the faithful are called to do.
- ii. Jesus said, "Look (truly truly I say to - which means 'PAY ATTENTION!') whoever believes in me, will do the things I have done."

- iii. Things like heal, love, forgive, teach, share hope, wash feet, eat with sinner, challenge ungodly authority, love the unlovable and the shunned ones... AND EVEN what he was ABOUT to do, which was lay down his life for the world.
- iv. And not only THAT, but those who believe in God will do **even greater things**. Some people think that Jesus meant the disciples would do miracles in greater capacity. What Jesus was really saying was that because those who come after him know the Rest of the Story (as the phrase goes), then the service and loving that they would do will be greater in scope because of the resurrection and empty tomb.
- v. The foot-washing life-style takes on its full meaning AFTER Easter. We do what we do to make disciples because Jesus is ALIVE! (shhh...that's coming on April 4th).

3. Application

- A. The application piece today is really embedded in the text itself.
- B. The key to today's Lesson #3 is that What You Believe Matters.
 - i. If you don't believe there's more to this existence than this earthly body, and that when you die, you cease to be, then encouragement will be always be fleeting in your life. You'll end up being forced to put your hope in money or people or governments for the time you have left.
 - ii. If you don't believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, then the alternative is to either think that anything and everything is the way to the presence of God...or, that there is NO way to God. The first lacks commitment and the second is hopeless.
 - iii. If you don't believe that Jesus is God or the God is Jesus, then Jesus was just a good teacher and holds no power over your life or your death.
- C. **What you believe matters** because faith in Jesus brings the presence of Jesus' Holy Spirit, who then flips the switch in your life that activates the foot-washing lifestyle of the followers of Jesus. In Jesus' Name!
- D. Lots of people do good things, and people are served, but when the going gets tough, the motivation to keep going ends.
- E. As a follower of Jesus, what you believe about Him transcends what happens in this world or to you. And I can prove it!
- F. You and I, the world, the church, our communities, have gone through some serious stuff this year - pandemic, political and racial unrest, isolation, etc. Has that stopped you from being a disciple? Has that stopped you from praying or finding ways to serve others? Has it?

- G. Nope. What I've seen is that when the going gets tough, those whose faith is in Jesus and believe the promise of the presence, get spurred on to passionately do good deeds...get spurred on to love more, to serve more. And, what I've seen from all of you this past year is an incredible spirit of grace for the shifting, pivoting, changing realities of your lives.
- H. It's all because what you believe matters!
 - i. It matters that you believe that you will be with God in a great room that Jesus has prepared for you. Stacy's Uncle died this week and the first thing we said was, "Praise God that he knew Jesus! His homecoming is complete! Yes!"
 - ii. It matters that you know the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You don't use that as a battering ram to beat people into the kingdom. You utilize that knowledge to be filled with hope and love the hell out of people so that the promise of new life is irresistible to them because they see it in YOU!
 - iii. It matters that you believe that Jesus is God and God is Jesus because only the omnipresent, omniscient, all-powerful God that made everything can offer everlasting life to you.
 - iv. And, it matters that your faith gets you out of your seat and out of your fear and out of your apathy and out of your guilt and shame for your past, and gives you THE mission that Jesus gave you...to make disciples for Him... to love them deeply and thoroughly...and to tell them about the promise Jesus wants to give them too.

4. Conclusion

- A. Church, our set of beliefs define who we are. We are always learning more and more about what that means.
- B. Jesus wanted us to know the core of the core of the core of our faith - that there's more than this life, that He is the one that reveals the way to God and what God is like, and that our faith is the foundation for our mission.
- C. We believe a lot of other things, but Jesus sat around this table with his disciples to make sure they got THAT foundation.
- D. Will you join them? Will you believe?
- E. Because what we're going to do next is the seal that Jesus put on the lessons that he taught them. He said, "You are loved. Love others. Have faith in me because there's more than you can see. I promise."
- F. When we believe his promise, the deal is sealed. I wish sometimes we all sealed our letters with red wax like they did in the 17th century. There's something so tangible and permanent about THAT kind of seal.

- G. Yet, it's nothing compared to the blood that sealed Jesus' promise of everlasting life, the promise of the Spirit to guide us, and the mission.
- H. Church, when you come to the table this morning by taking the bread and cup, let it place a seal on you...that the promises are true...and that what you believe matters.
- I. Let's pray...
- J. PRAY!