

March 19th, 2017

JESUS IS NOT A THINNER GOD

John 14:1-11

The biggest danger that the disciples were facing at this very moment and for the next 24 hours was defection. That's the magnitude of v.1 "Let not your hearts be troubled." Their hearts were troubled. And when our hearts get troubled, giving up looks like a really good option.

Why were they troubled? They were troubled because Jesus just told them that one of them was going to betray them (13:21) They were troubled because he told them in 13:33 "...yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me... 'Where I am going you cannot come.'" They were troubled because they learned of Peter's certain denial of Christ, v.38 "Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." And they had to have wondered: 'If Peter will deny Christ, what will become of us?'

And Jesus had many more difficult things to say during this farewell discourse. He's going to tell them in 15:19 "...because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world *hates* you." 15:20 "If they persecuted me, they will also *persecute* you." In 16:2 "Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever *kills* you will think he is offering service to God." As if those things were not bad enough, Jesus tells them in 16:12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." You mean there is worse news than just hatred, persecution and death? Yes.

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24) Following Jesus Christ is placing a cosmic target on your back for the fiery darts of the devil to find their demonic aim. Following Jesus Christ is entering into the fiercest war that ever has or ever will exist. And your enemies are not *mere* flesh and blood. They are the utterly satanic. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present

darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) Jesus was preparing his disciples and us for the onslaught of Satan.

This farewell discourse represents the greatest battle preparation speech ever spoken. Jesus lays it out very succinctly:

1. **He declares Himself to be our commander:** “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (14:6).
2. **He tells us of our duties:** “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (14:15).
3. **He gives us our most powerful weapon:** “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (14:16-17).
4. **He warns us not to retreat:** “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away” (15:2).
5. **He tells us of our opposition:** “because...I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (15:19).
6. **He tells us of the difficulty of the battle and the certainty of victory:** “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Therefore everything that Jesus is doing in these chapters is preparation for the war. Followers of Jesus Christ are at war. Paul said “Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 **Timothy 6:12**). Jude said “...contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (**Jude 3**)

And this is the most difficult war. Because our battle is not against each other. It’s not against different races. It’s not a war with bullets and bombs. It’s a war against sin and Satan. The greatest war we fight is the war within our own breast. Will I fight the good fight? Will I continue to trust in Christ? Or will I defect? Will I desert my post?

That’s what is in focus in this farewell speech. Jesus says in **16:1** “I have said all these things to you to *keep you* from falling away.” Jesus will not let His own people defect *ultimately*. And so He offers us the strongest defense against

defection. **THE STRONGEST DEFENSE AGAINST DEFECTION is to never lose the wonder of Jesus Christ.** The antidote to apostasy is admiration. “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God: for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God” (Psalm 42:5)

The moment we begin to lose admiration for Jesus, what happens? When His cross begins to look like a children’s Sunday school lesson, or His resurrection like a theological abstraction, or that His continual intercession for us like a tag line for a sermon, we begin to defect. We begin to frantically look for other gods, other idols, other comforts that will fortify our failing hearts. That’s what was happening here in the souls of the disciples in ch.14. They began to take their eyes off Jesus. They began to think they needed something more than Christ. Something fuller. Something more complete. Jesus +.

Jesus is not a thinner God. He is not a jr. version of what you need. He’s everything you need. He is what you need right now as you listen to this sermon. He is what you will need when you go home. He is what you need when you go to work. And He is what you will need on your death bed.

If you are seeking after something else as the foundation of your everlasting joy, you are seeking after a thinner god. And thinner gods will not sustain you, will not satisfy you, and will not save you.

☆ Jesus Is Not Thinner Than the Glory of This World

☆ Jesus Is Not Thinner Than the Glory of God the Father

The Big Idea...

All security and satisfaction is found in Christ alone, therefore do not seek after thinner substitutes

I. Jesus Is Not Thinner Than the Glory of this World

Heaven is then, what about now?

Recall from last week that the first way that Jesus spoke to our troubled hearts was to speak about Heaven. (v.1) “Do not let your hearts be troubled”, why? (v.3) “I go and prepare a place for you, [and] I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” In other words ‘Be comforted, because I am coming again, and when I do we will never be separated again.’

I can imagine someone thinking from that message ‘Ok, so when I get to see Jesus, all my troubles will melt away. But is there help now? That may be a long way off. I’m in trouble now. I’m in the middle of a crisis now. Defection for me feels very close. Is there help here and now?’

And I think that is how these disciples felt based on how they respond to Jesus. Both Thomas and Philip respond by asking for more than what Jesus offers them. First let’s look at Thomas’s response.

Separating Jesus from “the way”

Jesus says in v.4 “‘And you know the way to where I am going.’ [v. 5] Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the *way*?”

Notice what Thomas did: he separated the “way” from Christ. As if the “way” to have our hearts be comforted is from some other source, from some other glory down here, rather than Christ. The disciples thought their biggest problem was Roman occupation. And conversely, they thought the greatest achievement would be to have Jesus establish an earthly kingdom full of pomp and splendor in which they, as his disciples, would sit at his right and left hand. In other words, the “way” to a comfort a troubled heart is to simply “fix things” down here. Meaning, that the person of Jesus is too thin to fix the real problems of this life.

How are troubled hearts overcome?

Dear congregation, what are the *real problems* in your life? **What do you need *most right now*?** To be able to pay your bills? To be healed from failing health? To restore that devastated relationship? To get that job? To bring back that wayward child? Those are not your biggest challenges. The gospel of John repeatedly makes this clear.

1. The Samaritan woman—in John 4—*thought* she needed water most, but Jesus told her, her biggest need was living water: “...whoever drinks of the water that I give him will never be thirsty again” (4:14).
2. The disciples—in John 6—*thought* they needed physical bread most, but Jesus told them “Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you” (6:27).
3. The man born blind—in John 9—*thought* he needed his sight most, and Jesus taught him that his blindness was mainly spiritual: “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (9:35)
4. Martha and Mary—in John 11—*thought* they needed their brother’s life back the most, and then Jesus declared “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live” (11:25).

In all these examples, Jesus pointed to unbelief as the biggest problem that you and I face. But you may object and say “But I’m a believer. Unbelief is not my biggest problem anymore.” But you have to ask, who is Jesus speaking to in John 14? Believers! They were the ones who were clean (John 13:10); they were the ones who Jesus would not let fall away (John 16:1); they were the ones whom Father revealed the truth of Jesus to (Matthew 16:17). They were believers. And yet unbelief was their biggest problem. How does He address their troubled hearts? Look at v.1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; *believe also in me.*” Jesus is telling believers to believe.

You see, faith in Jesus Christ is not only the way that we are saved, **faith in Jesus Christ is what sustains our entire Christian life.**¹ “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh *I live by faith in the Son of God*, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)² Troubled hearts do not overcome by finding another “way”. That’s why Jesus said in v.4 “you know the way.” Jesus is saying ‘If you know truly know Me, you already have access to the solution for your troubled heart—Me.’³ But Thomas represents our unbelieving hearts. We forget. And when we seek to have our troubled hearts comforted by some other “way”, we are saying that Jesus is too thin to answer the problems of “real life.” So how does Jesus answer Thomas?

I AM the way

v.6 Jesus said to him, “I *am* **the way**, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The *emphasis* here is on Jesus being *the way*.⁴ That was Thomas’s question in v.5—“How can we know *the way*?” And Jesus ends v.6 in the answer to that question—“No one *comes* to the Father except *through* me.” In other words, ‘I *am* the **only way** to the Father.”

Therefore when Jesus says that He is the truth and the life, He means ‘I am the *only* way to the Father *because I am the truth of the Father.*’ And ‘I am the *only* way to the Father *because I am the life of the Father.*’ Feel the weight of what Jesus is saying. No one else in the universe can tell you the truth of who the Father is except for Jesus. He is the absolutely unique and only revelation of the Father, and without Jesus we would never know the Father

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, (Chicago, IL.,: Moody Publishers, 2008), pg. 105

² 2 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 6:16; 1 Thess. 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 13:7

³ “Belief is the opposite of your hearts being troubled.” <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-am-the-way-the-truth-and-the-life>

⁴ See R.C. Sproul’s *St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary: John*, (Orlando, FL.,: Reformation Trust, 2009), pg. 264; and D.A. Carson’s *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), pg. 491

(John 1:18) And no one else in the universe can grant you eternal life with the Father except the Son (John 1:12) “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11:27)

When Jesus says “I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” He is saying that ‘I am completeness. If you have Me, you have everything.’⁵ Thomas, troubled soul, the answer to your trouble is not found in some other way. As if something other than the supreme revelation of Father, and the supreme life-giver could provide you a better answer. Jesus is saying ‘If I am trust worthy enough to care for your soul that will never die, am I not trust worthy enough to care for your troubled heart?’

Jesus is not a thinner god than the troubles you will face in this life. There is not a better answer to those troubles than trusting Him.

II. Jesus Is Not Thinner Than the Glory of God the Father

“We need something more”

If Thomas’s question didn’t show us that the disciples had a thinner view of Jesus than they ought to have, than Philip’s certainly will. Philip says in v.8 “Lord, show us the Father, and it is *enough* for us.” Do you hear it? Philip, in speaking for the rest of the disciples, lets on that there was a crisis in their hearts. The disciples felt they were lacking something. They had Jesus in front of them, but felt that they needed something more. Philip says “Lord, show us the Father, and it is *enough* for us.” When Paul was praying for his thorn to be removed, the LORD told him “My grace is *sufficient* for you,” (2 Corinthians 12:9) It’s the same Greek word as “enough.” So Philip is saying “Jesus we are

⁵ Or as Thomas a Kempis said “Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth with thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope.” D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), pg. 492

lacking. We heard your promise of Heaven. We heard that you are the way to the Father. But we are still troubled. If you just show us the Father now, then we will find security and satisfaction. If you show us the Father, then we will have *enough*.”

The greatest good: seeing the Father

Now, on the one hand, this request is the greatest of all requests. Philip touches on the deepest human longing: to see God’s glory. This was Moses’ prayer “Please, show me your glory” (**Exodus 33:18**). It was David’s grand expectation at death “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness” (**Psalms 17:15**). To be in the unhindered presence of God, as John Piper has said, is “the highest, best, final, and decisive good of the gospel.”⁶ Philip and the disciples were simply verbalizing the same longing of all the saints. “O God...My soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you.” (Psalm 63:1). So on the one hand, the disciples desired the highest and best good, namely, to see the Father.

‘If the Father is enough, than I am enough’

However, on the other hand, this response by Philip showed that he thought Jesus was a thinner god than the Father. And you can hear the sadness in Jesus’ answer. v.9 “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?” ‘If the Father is enough for you, than I am enough for you, because to be in my presence is to be in the very presence of the Father Himself.’ “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Jesus so wants us to hear this that He repeats Himself four times in v.7-11:

v.7 “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

v.9 “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

⁶ John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2005), pg. 13

v.10 “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”

v.11 “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”

In other words, ‘...if your greatest longing is to see the glory of God, Philip, to see the Father, then you have seen him. He’s here now. When you see Me, you are seeing Him. Is that enough? Am I enough?’⁷

What will be enough for you?

Is Jesus enough for you? Thomas and Philip’s questions reveal the very same things our hearts do when we face trouble. For Thomas it was, “True security comes from something more than Jesus. For Philip it was, “True satisfaction comes with something more than Jesus.” So how would you finish these sentences? I feel most secure when _____. I feel most satisfied when _____. Is Jesus too thin of an answer for you?

I’m not denying that we have real problems, real struggles, real heartaches. Nor am I saying that the answer to our problems is to exercise some sort of wishful thinking. The disciples had real problems. In less than 24 hours they will have all abandoned Christ. The shepherd will have been struck and the sheep will have been scattered, and their world will have collapsed. Jesus is preemptively telling them what they must do to keep from falling away. Look at the bookends of this section—v.1 “Believe in God; believe also in me”; v.11 “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”

Believer—believe. Believe that in Christ you have the greatest security and satisfaction imaginable. And if all you have when you die is Christ, then you have everything. That is what Jesus means when He says “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.” ‘Child I am everything to you. I am the beginning, and the middle, and the end.’⁸ I am the only God that is strong enough to help you

⁷ Much help here from John Piper’s sermon “I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-am-the-way-the-truth-and-the-life>

⁸ As Calvin says here “[Jesus] is the beginning, and the middle, and the end.” John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XVIII*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks 2009), pg. 84

through the troubles of this life, and the only God that is able to make you stand before the Father.’

Application

Our Doctrine: Jesus is *not* the only way to God

We live in a very pluralistic, relativistic, inclusivistic culture. When Christianity first started to spread throughout the Roman empire after Pentecost, Christians were called atheists. Rome believed in polytheism, and when Christians said that there was only one God, they were accused of atheism. The world system has always sought its own way claiming that there are many ways to God. The fact is that is true, there are many ways to God. In fact, every single path leads to God.

Look again at v.6 in our passage. Jesus says “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the **Father** except through me.” Very important word selection there. Jesus says “No one comes to the **Father** except through me.” He doesn’t say God, He says Father. Jesus is the only way to the Father. Not the only way to God. The world thinks that is good news. All paths do lead to God—as judge, but only one path leads to God as a gracious Father.

1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”

Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Everyone will stand before God on the Last Day. And Scripture tells us that “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). The litmus test of your destiny is what you do with Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us that “No one comes to the Father except through me.” So the path is absolutely narrow. But the offer is absolutely free. John’s entire gospel was written so that men and women and children could be saved. John’s purpose statement is found in **20:31** “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Our Duty and Delight: Never lose the wonder of Jesus Christ

The strongest defense against defection is to never lose the wonder of Jesus Christ. One of the most powerful and affecting teachings that I heard at the Shepherd’s Conference was on the apostle Paul. Please turn to 2 Timothy 4. This was Paul’s last letter. And these last words that he writes on planet earth show what life long faithfulness to Jesus can often end in. Look at v.9

9 Do your best to come to me soon. **10** For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. **11** Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. **12** Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. **13** When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. **14** Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. **15** Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. **16** At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! **17** But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. **18** The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Notice what his faithfulness to Jesus Christ brought him as an old man.

1. (v.6) He was in prison waiting to be poured out as a drink offering. We know that historically, shortly after he wrote these words, he was executed by Caesar. Paul was executed because He was faithful to Christ.
2. (v.10) Demas, his co-worker, his friend had deserted him. Not everyone who began ministry with Paul ended with him, and this broke his heart. Paul was deserted because He was faithful to Christ.
3. (v.14-15) Alexander the coppersmith did him great harm. He was an open opposer of the gospel, and now while Paul is in prison, Alexander is left free to still oppose Timothy in Ephesus. Paul was persecuted because He was faithful to Christ.
4. (v.16) When Paul stood before Caesar to defend himself, every one of his friends and fellow Christians had deserted him. He stood entirely by himself in front of the most wicked tyrant in the world. Paul was abandoned because he was faithful to Christ.

And so we ask: how did Paul remain faithful to the end if this is what His end looked like? Because he never lost the wonder of Jesus Christ. As Dr. MacArthur noted “Even if no one ever believed, Paul still had the highest of all honors in belonging to Christ.”

Therefore as we close, I want to leave us with three wonders of Jesus from His farewell discourse that will fortify our troubled hearts and keep us from defecting.

Wonder 1. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to be with us forever

Jesus did not leave us as orphans in this world. He says in **14:16** “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,” What keeps you from defecting? The Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent. He is the one who is teaching us right now. **14:26** “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things...” Be

in wonder of those words. Everything that you have learned about the gospel, about our LORD Jesus Christ, it has been because the Holy Spirit has taught you. Jesus did not leave us alone. The Spirit of God instructs us, emboldens us, rebukes and corrects us, comforts us, strengthens us. Everything that we need between now and Jesus second coming, Jesus has provided in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Wonder 2. Jesus chose us out of the world

In the disciples' darkest hour, what does Jesus remind them of? Election. **15:19** "You are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world." What keeps you from defecting? The eternal and inviolable choice of Jesus Christ. As long as Jesus has been the eternal Son of God, He has chosen you unto salvation, and as long as He will be God you will remain His own. This choice was not of your own doing. You didn't choose Jesus first, and then He decided to choose you based on His foresight. As Steven Lawson has said, "That is a pagan myth, and the invention of human imagination." The Son of God doesn't learn. He doesn't react. His choice of you is what guaranteed your belief in Him. **15:16** "You did not choose me, but I chose you." And Jesus cannot un-choose you. "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out." (**John 6:37**). Your staying saved rests on Christ's omnipotent, immutable, grace. He's counting on your sins. He's factored them in. Even as Jesus is saying these words, He can see perfectly all the failures of His disciples. Failures in the next 24 hours, and the next 24 years, and yet He still says "You did not choose me, but I chose you."

Wonder 3. Jesus has overcome the world.

He says in **16:33** "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world." How did Jesus overcome the world? Through His death. When Jesus was put to death, your death died. When Jesus went to the cross, the main crisis of your life was settled—your sin. You no longer have any debt of sin to God. God canceled "...the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross." (**Col. 2:14**) Jesus has

already solved the supreme crisis of your life. You are not longer condemned. And even when you sin, and stumble and disobey, Jesus earned a perfect record of obedience, so that what the Father sees when He looks at you is the Son's obedience. That is why Jesus can say "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." "Trust Me. Hope in Me. I will never disappoint you and you will never defect.'