

**Reading:** Mark 14:12-26

**Theme:** Heading toward the Upper Room.

In the light of all the fears about the coronavirus, the threat of it affecting our lives and all the fears and anxieties it has caused, I thought it would be good start a new series that will take us into some of the most precious and important truths of the Christian faith. As we do so, we will see many things to comfort, encourage, give us peace and confidence. Yet at the same time we will see truths that will humble, even grieve us as the word of God will shine into our lives and present us with our shallowness as Christians, even our lack of love towards our Saviour, to each other and to a lost world. Yet they will also cause us to have hearts full of wonder and praise as we will see of our Saviour's love, care, patience, provision and prayerful concern for us.

In this series of sermons, some will, of necessity be searching, challenging; yet others will give comfort, encouragement and consolation. Both are necessary for us - to help refocus our lives from self and sin and to stir up our love, knowledge of and devotion to our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. In this series I anticipate, fear that I will inadequately deal with the precious truths we shall look at. I will need your prayers, especially so as we go on in our studies - to be able to the enormous truths clear and relevant to our lives.

Most of us will know that the word of God is precious - especially so the accounts of the life of the Lord Jesus - the Gospels, in which we see amazing things about Jesus. We learn of His conception, that He is God the Son taking a human body to Himself and was fully God and fully man - two natures yet one person. We learn of His birth, the account of the angel and angels announcing it, of shepherds being amazed and visiting the Saviour as He is laid in a feeding trough. We learn of the magi from the east and their gifts; of the departure of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus to Egypt; of their return and settling in at Nazareth. We learn only one thing of Jesus' as a youngster - as Scripture is silent over His development, growth and maturing years. We learn that about the age of 30, Jesus commences His ministry - His baptism, His temptation in the desert and His overcoming the devil in that situation.

We read of His miracles, teaching, power over nature, death, disease and demons. We learn how He gathered followers and from out of those He chose 12 to be close disciples. They were from a variety of backgrounds and abilities - which should be an encouragement to us! As Jesus travelled with these, they learned of and from Him. At one time they were asked as to who people said He was and various answers were given. On being asked who did **they** say He is, Peter said "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus owned that as true, correct and was it revealed by God to Peter and that truth would be the

basis, the rock on which the church would be built. Who do you say Jesus is?

At this point, Jesus told and to taught His disciples of His forthcoming death. As we'd expect, they didn't like such teaching - Peter said so! Peter, as well as the others were rebuked. From that point on, Jesus deliberately taught the disciples of His death especially - pointing out His death was coming and He did so on a number of occasions. He even talked about His resurrection, but that was overlooked and forgotten by the disciples! On the Mount of Transfiguration, as Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus, the 3 disciples with Him, also heard of the death Jesus would accomplish at Jerusalem.

In the final week of Jesus' earthly life, many things happen - the Jews hated Jesus, wanted Him out of the way. Judas agreed to betray Him and the Jewish leaders are forced by the extraordinary events on Palm Sunday to plan to take Jesus as a prisoner at the feast time - which initially they did not want to do. The days after Palm Sunday were quite remarkable as Jesus gave much teaching - the parables, teaching on the end of the world. Each of the Gospels then tell us of the Thursday - the first day of the feast of Passover, the day the Passover lamb was taken, killed and eaten.

Our attention in all the 4 Gospels is directed to a room, a borrowed room where the 'Last Supper' occurred. We

clearly read of this in the first 3 gospels (*called the Synoptic gospels*). We read of the meal, of Jesus speaking of the one who would betray Him; of Judas leaving; of the institution of the Lord's supper; of them all leaving and going to the Mount of olives, the garden of a Gethsemane - we learn of His betrayal, His capture, His mock and illegal trial, His being condemned, mocked, beaten, carted off to Pilate, then to Herod and back to Pilate. All this leads to and concludes in His death by crucifixion - the death He had spoken of; the events He knew beforehand would happen, which He taught of and occurred just as He said.

These events are so clear, so important and yet incredibly when we look at John's gospel, we find he wrote of the Passover meal being ready, but he says no more of it... Yet he wrote of glorious things the other gospel writers did not mention. For John focuses our attention on things that were said and taught there in the upper room. A book by Charles Ross on these chapters is called "*The Inner Sanctuary*" - showing something of the priceless holy nature of the things recorded in them. It is these 5 glorious chapters I plan to work through over the months ahead! There's no mention of the Passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Table is not directly mentioned. Here we see totally different things laid before us - Jesus, God in the flesh, the Lord of glory, strips to a loincloth and washes the dirty feet of the proud disciples, who, according to the other gospels, were still questioning and

arguing who would be the greatest! We see the tender warning about someone betraying Him, of Judas' departure. From that point on, it is as if Jesus then opens His heart and teaches the disciples precious and holy truths. He speaks of a number of things in this precious and openhearted time with His disciples - doing so as He's approaching all the known terror and horror of the events on Calvary that lay ahead of Him some 18 hours or so in the future.

I find it incredible, that Jesus, at such a time, was not concerned for Himself, but for His disciples and us. In this section there are tremendous words to comfort and to challenge us: **chapter 13** - will we be willing to give humble service after Jesus' example? Will we take care to make sure that we will not be found to deny and betray Jesus? Are we ready and willing to be able to live, fully show and obey the new commandment?

Not only the challenges, but great comforts - **chapter 14** has 10 main points of comfort, it is stuffed full of, overflowing with comfort and encouragement for the disciples and us. I wonder how many troubled, tired, weary, struggling, confused and distressed believers have found great comfort from this passage, a feast that has refreshed, empowered and enlivened their lives and faith! We do not know what effects the coronavirus will have on our own lives, the lives of our families, friends and the life of the church. No doubt many of us will turn to John 14

for comfort, encouragement and to spur us on to pray with confidence and expectation. It could be we will take comfort from Jesus' promise of going to prepare a place in heaven for us, of we being with Him, of many mansions, rooms in heaven for us; of the promise of Jesus being the Way, the Truth and the Life. We will see the promise of the Holy Spirit as the Counsellor, Comforter and Him coming to be with us and indwelling us as believers - so that we will know that we are not alone or abandoned, but He will lead guide us. Also, we will go to the promise of Jesus' peace and we are not to have troubled hearts (14:27).

As we move into **chapter 15**, we will see the Lord Jesus comparing Himself to the Vine and our need to abide in Him to bear fruit; we will learn of more commands of Jesus, of Him calling believers His "*Friends*". We will see the warning of being hated by the world and yet we are told that as believers we are chosen out of the world by Christ. We will learn that we have to testify and witness of the Lord Jesus, even in a world that hates Him and us, but again we are not alone as in v26-27 we are told of the help and company of the Holy Spirit who is given us as believers.

**Chapter 16** begins with a warning of opposition, but again there is the precious truth told us of the continuing "ordinary" work of the Holy Spirit. I use the term "ordinary" in a theological way, to distinguish it from the

“extraordinary” works of the Holy Spirit as we see revealed in the manifestation of the gifts in the book of Acts. Yet please remember that the “ordinary” work of the Holy Spirit is supernatural, divine and is the very basis of our Christian life, joy and comfort. The main principle and aim of the Holy Spirit’s work are highlighted in 16v14 - He will glorify Christ as He will take of what is Christ’s, all He has been given by the Father and make them known to us, in us and through us. This is not going to happen all in one go, as we would be burnt up or overwhelmed completely! Yet these are mediated to us through the Holy Spirit, so we can glorify Christ and praise the Father. It is Trinitarian - we adore, worship and praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - which we will see more as we come to look at these passages in more detail.

Jesus speaks to these disciples, of them being parted from Him, they having great sorrow. There are many sorrowful times in our lives, especially that of parting from loved ones – a real possibility in our current uncertain times, but here Jesus assured His disciples of seeing Him again - in other words His death and resurrection. They were assured of this and the love of the Father.

Some have described the book of John as going into the temple - the outer courts, then in chapters 13 to 16 we are in the outer area of the sanctuary, but in **chapter 17** we move into the holy of holies! Here in the light of all Jesus was going to go through, with a perfect knowledge of who

He was, where He was going and what He would go through, Jesus prays. Personally, I do not like the heading in NIV “*Jesus prays for Himself*” - as it is too limited a description of this part of the prayer. This whole prayer has been called “*The High Priestly Prayer*”. Yes, Jesus does pray for Himself in v1-5, but not in a selfish way. His aim in all He prays is that He may glorify the Father and to give eternal life to those who believe on Him. Why pray this? He did so because of you and me - He desired to go and endure the cross, to glorify God the Father in the through the plan of salvation so that people like us could be saved, rescued, know His love and His joy fully in both time and eternity.

The Lord Jesus longed, after 33 years of being “self-isolated” in His humanity from the intrinsic intimate love and especially the full glory of the Father, to be glorified with and intimately experience that again. We fail to grasp the trial the incarnation was to Him and may regard it as if it was a light thing. Yet realise that way of returning to His previous state of glorification, was going to be through the cross - all its unimaginable sufferings and horrors.

In v6-18 Jesus prays for His **immediate disciples** - for their preservation while they were in the world; then their sanctification - that they would be holy. I find it amazing that with all the darkness and horror of the cross immediately before Him, knowing that all the disciples

would let Him down, even in a short while, yet He prays for them. In v19ff Jesus prays for **every believer** who would come after His first disciples. This means He prayed for you and me - with all our difficulties and problems, even as we face this coronavirus pandemic and any other problems that come our way in life. He prays for our united viewing and consideration of Christ in His glory. He wants all Christians to be united in the Truth, in their love and service of Him. Jesus also says that He desires, longs for you and me to be with Him in heaven and to gaze upon His wonderful glory (v24)! He promises to be at work in us, be with us and make the love of God for the Son to be known among us.

After having seen that quick survey, that overview of what I want to tackle in the time ahead, perhaps you begin to see and grasp the enormous nature of that what I propose to preach through and on. I hope you can see the need for your prayers as I prepare! Please pray for me, but also pray for yourselves, that the Lord will equip us all to prepare our hearts to receive His word as we come and have our hearts and lives dealt with by our Saviour.

As we come to this “sanctuary”, remember that in OT the sanctuary of the temple had 2 gold covered doors with cherubim and open flowers on it. Either side of the doors were 2 great brass pillars - Boaz and Jakin, which mean “strengthened” and “established” respectively. As we approach the sanctuary in chapters 13-17, we are to make

note that the entrance doorway to it is John 13:1-3 *“It was just before the Passover Feast. **Jesus knew** that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. **Jesus knew** that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God”*.

All that is done and said here in chapters 13-17 happens with the perfect divine self-knowledge of Christ and is carried out in light of His awful death the next day. Amazingly Jesus was not preoccupied with Himself and what lay ahead, but we read He loved His own in the world, He loved them unto the end, to the uttermost, He showed them the full extent of His love - but God willing we will look at this in more detail next week.

The things we will go on to look at, are tender and an amazing expression of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples. This will also show us of His tender love and care for us, even as we are in hard, confusing and strange times. We should not be indifferent or apathetic to the things we will look at. It is to be made personal - as if the word of God says *“Having loved Gareth James, He showed him the full extent of His love both on that Passover evening and that first Good Friday.”*

I know I've covered much in summary, this introduction and to be honest, it is difficult to apply such, but I would urge us all to read this section regularly and make sure that **first of all** we are not a Judas and miss out on the truth and comfort of these passages, even being excluded from the High Priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus as He prays for His people. I pray the Lord would help us all, both now and, in the future, to understand and apply these passages. Pray that I will understand them more fully and know God's help as I prepare and preach these wonderfully comforting and encouraging, but awesome truths.