



MAKING IT CLEAR

A Study of John 16



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“They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you,

“but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will

receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

At this, some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father’?” They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.”

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’? Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief,

but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

“In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

“I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”

Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.”

“Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave

me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:2-33

New International Version

A Time Is Coming

Is the persecution faced by first-century Christians still possible in today's world? Absolutely. The time is coming

I didn't realize when I started preparing my posts for this week how much everything was going to overlap! As I've felt the intensity in Jesus' voice rise during these last few chapters in John's gospel, I feel like everything happening in our modern day is rising with it. Do you feel it too?

If you've been following my Friday Focus posts for long, you might wonder why we skip from John 14 to John 16 today. I'm playing catch up. After meditating several weeks on John 15, I felt we had to go back and pick up all these wonderfully long dialogues of Jesus with his disciples. Writing in the midst of a global pandemic, all I wanted to do was hear his voice. So, if you so choose, feel free to re-read John 15 and the posts that went with that chapter before starting this series.

We ended that focus on the Vine Life with the first verse of chapter sixteen. He told them all he'd shared so that they would not go astray. That's where we pick up today. It's important that we don't stray from Jesus, because:

They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you.

John 16:2-4

Jesus knew what he was facing, but he was very aware that the disciples were clueless as to what they would face because of their association with the rebel rabbi. That's why these intimate moments before the cross were so crucial. He needed to lay it all out, so that later, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they would remember his words and gain strength from them.

He didn't tell them that a time might come, or it's a possibility that something bad may happen — No, he said, a time is coming, was sure to come, when a person who kills them will think he's serving God.

Wow, let that sink in a bit. How would you have taken that if you'd been sitting at his feet? Was he talking about the occupying powers? No, he was talking about their own people. Religious leaders from their own community. Sure, Romans and other Gentiles would get caught up in the effort,

but the main instigators would be Jews, just like them.

While we think about the hard-hearted Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus would know this in an even more intimate way, for it was prophesied in a psalm of David hundreds of years prior:

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

Psalm 41:9

Judas, thinking he was doing a service to God, led the enemies of Christ to him for thirty pieces of silver.

A time is coming...A time has come. It came for Christ.

A time is coming, and a time came for his disciples too, martyred for the cause of their Savior.

A time is coming, and a time came for Steven, Paul, and countless believers of the first century and the centuries that followed.

Does this speak to us today? Maybe not you, but if not you, who?

The world continues to be full of those who do not know the Father or Christ the Son, and they will be active in their desire to squelch the Church, the witness of Christians.

Maybe not in your town, but where?

Don't deny the possibility that you could face such opposition. He's warned you, after all...so, when the time comes, remember.

Three Areas of Conviction

What is the role of the Holy Spirit? Jesus tells us in John 16, that the world will be convicted by the Spirit, but this conviction allows for no recourse.

The words of Jesus were wounding his disciples, because they weighed so heavily on their hearts. He was talking about leaving them, coming persecution, and loads of other things that sounded bad, though they couldn't quite grasp it all. Their grief was keeping them from even asking the right questions to get clarification on what they were hearing. That's alright. Jesus knew that eventually they would come to understand, and we too would benefit from this recorded conversation.

So, let's take a big chunk of John 16 today, as we need it to understand where Jesus was going with all this too:

Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your own good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to

righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

John 16:5-11

While we know the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus refers to here as the Counselor, as the person of the Trinity who fills us, guides us, helps us to understand scripture, and many more wonderful things, in this passage, Jesus is telling his followers that the Spirit has an even more expansive role that might be hard to hear.

Christ returned to the Father to enable the Spirit to work, not only in the lives of believers, but the world.

The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world all dealt with the world's reaction to Jesus. It's important here to know that the use of the word *world* is to designate any and all who reject Jesus and his purpose of redemption. It's that rejection that the Holy Spirit addresses with conviction of guilt.

What are the three convictions?

- Sin

- Righteousness
- Judgment.

There is a time when the Holy Spirit will prove the world got it wrong. They got it wrong in thinking they could live as they please, according to their earthly lusts and sinful desires.

There is a time when the Holy Spirit will prove the world got it wrong in relation to who Jesus was as the righteous Son of God, who died for our sins, rose from the grave to defeat sin and death, and now stands at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

There is a time when the Holy Spirit will prove the world got it wrong about judgment, because it is coming and it will last for eternity.

When does that conviction come? Perhaps at a time of great crisis. Maybe when a person faces death. Ultimately, it will be upon Christ's return.

Remember these verses?

For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11 (CSB)

Knees will bow upon his return, some willingly in adoration and worship, while others in fear and trembling out of conviction by the Spirit. Either way, all will know that Jesus Christ is Lord. There's no getting around it.

Have you been under the Spirit's conviction? I pray you yielded and surrendered your life to Christ the first time, because there's a conviction coming with no turning back allowed.

May our world heed the truth of our sinful estate, the gift of our righteous redeemer, and freedom from judgment before the Spirit proves them wrong.

The Guide to Truth

What is truth? How can you find it or know it?
There is a guide waiting to show you.

Truth seems like an elusive word these days. In fact, just today, a friend said, “I don’t believe anyone anymore.” I get where she’s coming from, because I know the sources.

Thankfully, in our passage today, Jesus reveals to his disciples, who were struggling to understand what he was trying to tell them, that help was on the way. Before we go further, let’s read these verses in John 16:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

John 16:12-15

I am so grateful for these words of Jesus, because they help me to know that he understands our struggles too, and I think in this day of rising falsehoods and deception, he wants to remind us that there is one place for truth—in Him.

That's why the Spirit's here to help. When we're confused by the noise of the world, the Spirit of truth guides us into all truth.

Do you know why we can trust the Spirit? Because he's not speaking on his own. He's speaking that which belongs to the Father and Christ. Working together in complete harmony no one person of the Trinity can speak in isolation. All their words, all their actions are a unified whole.

Now, flip Jesus' words upside down, as you think about the world today.

Do you know how you know someone is not speaking the truth?

- He's speaking for himself alone.
- He's not in harmony with God's Word or will.
- He brings glory to himself.

Should be a pretty easy guide for measuring the words of others, right? Easy to say, hard to do sometimes...because words are deceptive.

Back to the Spirit: Did you catch that last point? Not only is the Spirit speaking for Christ and the Father, not only is he in perfect harmony with them, as he speaks their words, but he's bringing glory to Christ in the process.

How does the Spirit bring glory to Christ? By taking what Christ offers and making it known to his disciples.

That's us too, by the way. Christ is glorified, when we allow the Spirit to fill our minds with the truth of who Christ is and what he says in his Word. He's glorified, because we cannot help but be changed as a result. When we allow the truth to permeate our minds and being, we start living like "little Christs" in this world, reflecting his character in our own words and actions, thus drawing others to him.

Wow! Do you think the disciples understood all that in that moment? No, but they soon would, and when they did on the day of Pentecost, allowing the Spirit to fill them—boy, was Christ glorified! So much so, that over 3,000 people came to faith in one day.

Glory!

So, whose truth are you listening to? Maybe it's time to turn off the noise and tune into the Spirit, but get ready to be changed in the process to his glory.

Hush, and I'll Tell You

Having a hard time understanding Jesus? Maybe it's time to be quiet and listen to him instead of others.

Have you ever noticed how sometimes people would rather just keep asking each other what they think someone means by what they said rather than go directly to that person to find the answer? We're funny creatures, us humans.

I'm just grateful the disciples didn't have social media to do this!

What am I talking about? I'm looking at a funny interaction between Jesus and his followers as he's trying to finish up a crash course before he faces the cross. It's part of our walk through the words of Jesus in the gospel of John. Today we're in chapter 16. Let me lay it out for you here:

Jesus went on to say, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."

At this, some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and

‘Because I am going to the Father?’” They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.”

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’?”

“Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

John 16:16-22

Do you see what I mean? All Jesus said was, “In a little while you’re not going to see me anymore, but then, after a bit, you’ll see me again.” (That’s my paraphrase). That drove the disciples to distraction!

Instead of responding to Jesus and asking him, they probably pulled back and started whispering to each other. It’s not like this was something new.

He'd said this several times from chapters 13 onward. It just wasn't getting through to them what it meant.

Poor guys—no Holy Spirit, no understanding.

I feel for them, and so, apparently did Jesus, because he basically told them to hush up and listen. *Very truly I tell you* is just another way to say, *hush, listen to me now*. And he did.

His death, his first departure would bring them much grief. They would have every right to mourn the one they'd grown to love. The world, in the meantime, would be rejoicing over his death, because they would think they'd won.

Thankfully, the tables would soon turn, because their grief would be brief and momentary (three days, to be precise), and then all heaven would break loose and their resurrected Lord would appear, restoring their joy and putting the world into long-term mourning.

The joy they would come to know would be forever, lasting through whatever was to come in this life and into the next.

Isn't it much better when we stop trying to find the answers to life's questions from the world and

those around us and just go to the source? I know the disciples were glad Jesus had mercy on them that day and put them out of their misery.

He'll do the same for you — just hush up and listen.

The Day Prayer Changed

What made the difference in Old Testament prayers and New Testament ones? A name...Jesus. Are you praying in his name? You have to believe before you do.

The time for talking is almost over. As we've walked through these last chapters of John's gospel each Friday, we're getting ever closer to the day when no one speaks. For today, however, we're pressing on in John 16, and Jesus is telling his disciples about a new reality to come. Let's take a listen:

In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

John 16:23-27

They'd been peppering him with questions, but now Jesus says a day is coming when all questions will end. Post-resurrection and after the Holy Spirit's arrival, so much of what he's been saying and teaching will become clear to his followers. A big lightbulb (or candle, since it's 2,000 years ago) will go off in their minds.

That's when questions will turn to requests.

Confident of who Christ is and firm in their faith, the disciples' relationship to God will change. Now they will have a name through which to connect directly with the Father—that name is Jesus, and with that name comes power.

Until this point in their relationship, they haven't used it, but he's pre-approving their ability to do so. When they do ask and receive, they will experience such joy, because they'll realize that Jesus really hasn't left them. No, he's still with them through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit while also standing at the right hand of the throne of God, interceding on their behalf. What a marvelous mystery revealed.

With the Spirit, Christ's words are understood—made plain to those who cling to him.

I love this cool statement by Jesus: “I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.” What does that mean? It means, they have a direct line to God himself. The Spirit is the switchboard operator, the name of Jesus puts the call through.

Because we love and believe in Christ, we never lose connection.

Prayer was forever changed because of the name of the One who died for our sins, rose from the dead, and will return again.

Just wait until next week to see what the disciples thought about that! I know what I think, what about you?

Understanding and Peace

What brings peace in a world of trouble? Only the understanding that comes with faith in Jesus.

We're almost there. At the end of conversation and questions, ready to hear the most beautiful prayer in all of scripture. Yet, there are still a few more words between Jesus and his disciples in this sixteenth chapter of John. Jesus had just told them about how their prayers would change post-resurrection, and once again, he tells them he is leaving:

"I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

"Do you now believe?" Jesus replied. "A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:27-33

“Now we get it!” Finally, it seemed the disciples understood what Jesus meant by having to leave them. It sure took them long enough, right? I have to laugh when they add, “now we see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions.” Did Jesus ever *need* anyone to ask him questions? Who asked the most, anyway? These guys who suddenly got it and believed.

Jesus must have had fun ribbing them with an “oh, you finally believe?” How many years had they been with him? What a patient God we serve. Then I’m reminded he’s making sure all this gets on record for some other “disciples” to come...whose faith may be pretty shaky at times too.

Even so, Jesus knows that this great faith they now have would go out the window in just a few hours, when soldiers arrest him on false pretenses. He was at peace with that, because he knew what they would one day come to know too—he was not alone; the Father was with him.

He said as much with the last verse in our beautiful chapter. “I have told you these things...” He said all he said, taught all he taught, so they would, under the power of the Holy Spirit, have peace in him. His words would all be proven true in the sacrifice to

come and be made available in the resurrection and ascension closely thereafter. In that moment, they would know peace, because he would be made known in their hearts and minds by the filling of the Holy Spirit. What they had known in part, they would then know in full.

This doesn't mean their life would be easy. Nope, not for them, not for us; for this old world is full of trouble. Still, though trouble was a guarantee, so too was the victory that was made sure in his act of obedience to the Father on our behalf.

Reading or hearing the words of Jesus doesn't guarantee peace. It is only as we believe in him as Savior that we gain the understanding of these words through the power of the Spirit and have peace. Without the knowledge that Christ has overcome the world, we can't know peace in a world of evil and strife. Knowing that Christ has overcome the world is the only thing that allows us to live in peace in the midst of trouble.

Do you now believe?

Making it Clear for Us

When we ask, Jesus does not hesitate to make things clear for us. In this study of John 16, we have seen how he does just that, not only for his disciples then, but for us today.

As we have walked together through the sixteenth chapter of John's gospel, we've had front-row seats to the final conversation Jesus would have with his disciples prior to the crucifixion. Though we will be blessed to hear a prayer he offers up on their behalf, this chapter is the end of a long back-and-forth we've been reading through, full of questions we've made our own.

The more I dwell on the words of Jesus in this precious gospel, the more I'm encouraged to live for him despite the troubles of this world today. I hope you are too. Read back through his words in John 16, as we prepare next to let him pray over, not only his disciples, but us as well.

Grace and Peace

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