

Daily Devotions      Monday 8th June 2020

John 14 1-14 (esp 12-14)

'He will do even greater things than these.' (v12) Jesus is talking about the miracles he has performed in v11 and now says that we will be capable of greater things. What could possibly be greater than turning water into wine (I wish! Esp. Amarone!), healing the sick, calming a storm or raising someone from death to life?

Jesus used the miracles to draw attention to his divine nature. Through them he displayed his rule over all created things, over nature and over life and death. The phrase, 'the evidence of the miracles' was used in his speech to get the disciples to believe that, 'he was in the Father and the Father was in him.' The two are one.

I have yet to meet any disciple of Christ who is capable of the kinds of miracles that Jesus demonstrated so what are these 'greater things' that he speaks of. The key is in verse 13, 'so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.' Jesus brings glory to God the Father whenever a person comes to an understanding of his need for salvation and that it was achieved for that person through Jesus's sacrifice.

Yesterday we read that God the Father was at work in Jesus when he spoke. He is still doing that work through us when we speak his words and do his will to point people to Christ. Even if we were capable of bringing someone back from death to life it would not be as great a thing as pointing someone to the eternal life possible in Christ. We may have performed a miracle in the eyes of the world but in the eyes of Jesus a temporary extension to life on earth isn't as great a miracle as someone gaining eternal salvation.

We often chant the mantra, 'in the name of Jesus' at the end of our prayers as if it gives the prayer some kind of extra power. The name Jesus means 'he saves.' Prayers in the name of Jesus are to do with bringing glory to God through the Son. They have to fit with the will and nature of God. What's more, Jesus promises to grant fulfilment to such prayers.

What an incredible thought and responsibility that Jesus considers us pointing people to him is greater than the miracles he performed!!

Daily Devotions      Tuesday 9th June 2020

John 14 15-21 (esp 16-17)

The word Counsellor ('advocate' in some versions) is a translation of a Greek word, 'paraclete'. The literal translation is 'called alongside' but there is no word or phrase in English that sufficiently gives it full meaning. The Counsellor is the Holy Spirit, the presence of God within a Christian who's ministry is manifold. His work is to teach, convict of sin, lead, guide, help and comfort. He can be grieved (usually by our sin), resisted and quenched.

Anyone outside of Christ is unaware of the Holy Spirit's intimacy. (v17) It is possible to know about him but here Jesus says, 'know him', which means to have a relationship with him! This is only possible when a person is born again and the Spirit of Truth takes up residence in that person.

In v16, Jesus tells us that the the Holy Spirit will be with us for ever! How amazing that God in all his holiness is prepared to live in us alongside all our sin in the form of his Holy Spirit!

The Holy Spirit left Saul (1 Sam 16v14) and David feared his sin would cause God to remove the Spirit from him (Psalm 51v11). We are right to fear that our sin should drive out the Holy Spirit but here Jesus promises that it will not happen. Instead the Spirit convicts us of the sin within and gently guides us to deeper and deeper holiness as we try to deal with it.

How well do we know the Holy Spirit? How well do we take note of that 'still small voice' that prompts us towards thoughts words and actions that will make us more like Jesus?

Let's give him greater access to our hearts. Invite him to, once again, have his way in our lives as he teaches, guides and corrects us! He is love and love always wants the best for us.

Daily Devotions      Wednesday 10th June 2020

John 14 15-21 (esp v18-20)

We are blessed to have the whole picture as revealed through the Word of God but you can imagine the disciples' confusion listening to what must have sounded like riddles from Jesus. I'm going but I'm coming. You won't see me then you will see me! Sounds like some of the conversations I have with Lynda!

What could he mean? It could be that he meant he was going to heaven and would return to collect us (v2,3). It could mean that after he has gone to heaven he will come as the Holy Spirit to live in us (v20). He tells the disciples here that the world will not see him anymore (because he has died?) but that they will see him when he appears to them in resurrected form. This is proof to them, as it is for us, that they and we could also have life after death.

The resurrection is crucial to our faith. We don't need to make up theories of what happens after we die because we have, in Christ, someone who has been through it and is alive today. The evidence for the resurrection is extremely convincing even from a purely impartial historical and archaeological perspective.

'Because I live, you also will live!' (v19)

A quick thinking Christian was once asked where he lived. He replied, 'I can tell you my temporary address but my permanent home is in heaven!'

Spurgeon once did a children's talk in an orphanage. He put his hands in a bowl of water and asked the children why his hands weren't drowning. One lad replied, 'Because your head is out of the water!' He went on to explain that Christ was the head of the church that he had risen and was alive. And because he was alive, we, his body, cannot die.

Praise God that we have the hope of eternal life for ourselves once we have committed ourselves to him. Praise him also for the comfort that comes from knowing that those we love who have already died in Christ have that eternal life now and are in the company of Jesus.

Daily Devotions      Thursday 11th June 2020

John 14 15-24 (esp. 21-24)

Once when our boys were little and in baby seats on a trip in the car, we noticed Luke had undone his safety belts. Lynda reached round, told him off and fastened them. Moments later it happened again. And again and again and again!! Every tactic of discipline was employed, tears rolled, even Jack and Harry pleaded with him but nothing would stop his persistence!! It was a fraught journey that we laugh about now.

Despite Luke's security never being in doubt or the ever patient love of his parents, there was very little by way of harmony and happiness in the car that day.

Jesus is not telling us here that our security and salvation are dependant on our obedience. Our obedience comes as a result of our salvation and love for him.

Our obedience demonstrates our love and the fact that we are saved. God's unconditional love is then ours to enjoy. We are all too aware that sin and disobedience spoils the harmony and intimacy we have with God.

Simply keeping the rules is neither enough nor even possible. Remember what Jesus said when asked what the greatest commandment was? Love God and love your neighbour. Love comes first! (And notice the order!)

God's love for his created people is never in doubt and is always constant. It is when someone comes to love him that the relationship can blossom and the intimacy grow. The Father and Jesus, we are told, can then make their home with that person.

How much do we make Jesus feel at home in our lives? Would he feel at home in our houses? Would we feel at home with him in our houses? There may be things we do or say, things we watch, read or browse on the internet that would spoil our intimacy with him despite his unchanging love for us.

Let's pray to the Holy Spirit for help to develop a deeper, more complete harmonious relationship with Jesus based on our ever increasing obedience to him.

Daily devotions      Friday 12th June 2020

John 14 vs 25-27

Again in these verses Jesus promises the Holy Spirit. He speaks specifically to the disciples but, as with all scripture, we also have to look at what it is saying to us. When Jesus has gone and in years to come, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter and James will record their memories and teachings of Christ that will eventually become our Bible!

I struggle to remember yesterday, let alone what's happened in detail in the last 3 years and in particular I struggle to remember what people say to me in any detail. (and...no.. that's got nothing to do with too much nice wine. As you know :( )

To the disciples with him he promises help to remember his teaching. The Holy Spirit will come and guide them to record the exact words he had spoken. To us the Holy Spirit comes to help us appreciate and assimilate what is recorded!

A story is told of a king who had a mental health problem. He was advised by an astrologer (not recommended) that he would be cured if he was to wear the shirt of a contented man. His servants searched all of his kingdom for such a man. After a long search they found a really happy contented person. But he didn't even possess a shirt!!

Jesus speaks of peace in verse 27. This is a unique peace! It is not the absence of war. It is a peace within our hearts that comes from knowing that all is right between us and the God of the Universe. A contentment that comes from being happy with our lot. A peace that is granted to us by Jesus through his sacrifice for our sins satisfying God's wrath. It is a peace that comes from knowing God is in control and if we trust in him then we have nothing to fear or worry about.

We trust a pilot, the engineering and Bernoulli's principle, (Google it) every time we fly in a plane. How much more sensible and reliable to trust in an infallible God to carry us through life.

John 14 vs 28-31

Back in John 10 v 30 Jesus said, 'I and the Father are one.' Here he talks about going to the Father and that the Father is greater than he is! It seems to be a contradiction and people have tried to use this verse to discredit the divinity of Jesus.

We need to look at the context. Originally, the Father, Spirit and Son existed as one in heaven called God. Jesus, the Son, has come to earth and taken on flesh and blood to fulfil God's plan of salvation. Once complete, he must return to heaven (to his Father) because it is where he belongs. The Father is only greater because he is in heaven whereas Jesus, 'has been made a little lower than the angels' (Heb. 2v7) and is earthbound, contained in human form.

In verse 29, Jesus basically says that when he returns to the Father, the penny will drop and they will understand what it has all been about.

Verses 30 and 31 contain so much! Like a vicious dog on a leash Satan is allowed to put Jesus on the cross. How reassuring are his words when he says, '..he has no hold on me.' Satan's power is limited and Jesus uses him to fulfil his mission. He has come into the world that he created to bring salvation to his people through his own personal death! He died because of his love for us but primarily because of his love for his Father. The extent of that love was shown in his commitment to do exactly what the Father has told him to do. This love was tested to the limit in Gethsemane on the night of his arrest when, in anguish, he sweat drops of blood as he thought of what was to come. Yet still he said to his Father, '...not my will but yours be done.' (Luke 22v42)

Back in verse 22 Jesus said, 'If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching.' Jesus is about to provide the ultimate demonstration of love through obedience! This puts our acts of love into perspective. Our gifts, our hugs, our help with the kids, our offers to help with the shopping, our cups of tea and chat, our phone calls and texts are all nice demonstrations of love but Jesus died out of love for his Father God.

As the Bee Gees once sang, 'How deep is your love?'