

Sam Storms

Bridgeway Church

John 13-17 / #12

August 21, 2016

Sermon Summary #12

Hope for the World in the Words of Jesus

John 14:25-31

I can't begin to tell you how many times during the course of a normal week that someone asks me, in an obviously distressed and confused tone of voice: "Sam, what's wrong with our world? What is happening? Is there any hope at all?"

The conversation then takes an immediate turn to a description of the countless ways in which society appears to be unraveling at the seams. Some point to the laws being enacted in several states that will allow a person who was born biologically a male, who now feels or believes himself to be a female, to enter into the same public bathroom previously set apart exclusively for females. These same laws will also grant access to such individuals to share the same locker room in our public schools with our daughters and grand-daughters. This isn't an exaggeration. It has already happened. And woe betide the state, such as North Carolina, that puts in place legislation that would prohibit such an abomination. Only time will tell if North Carolina can hold its ground or will eventually cave in to public and financial pressure.

Although it isn't new to our society, an equally disturbing development is the increasing racial tension that is spilling out into our streets. This is especially true in the heated relationship that exists between our local police forces and many in the African-American community. Although be it noted that I applaud many in both of these communities who are laboring for understanding and harmony.

I'm sure all of us could easily identify numerous other crises that only seem to be getting worse: drug addiction, alcoholism, radical Islamic terrorism, insider stock trading, bribery, Ponzi schemes that rob people of their life savings, and then of course corruption of every imaginable sort at the highest levels of our government (and here I have in mind both the Democratic and Republican parties).

The deeper and more intensely that people go into conversation and concern over such issues, the more likely they are to say something like this to me:

“Sam, why don’t you talk more explicitly about these issues? Why don’t you take a public stand from the platform on Sunday mornings? Why don’t you try to mobilize the people of Bridgeway to be more aggressive and personally involved in political affairs? Why don’t you encourage us to take to the streets in protest and to participate in boycotts of certain businesses that support the very moral decay that you’ve just described?”

Now, before I go one step farther I want to pause and say something, and I hope you will all hear me well. ***I believe that Christians should respond to these many issues as their conscience dictates. I believe that it is perfectly biblical and often essential for Christians to get directly involved in the political process.*** I rejoice that we are seeing an increasing number of born-again-Bible-believing men and women running for local, statewide, and national office. There are times when joining a public protest or boycott is the right thing to do, if your conscience, as governed by Scripture, should lead you to participate.

So I don’t want anyone here today or anyone who will listen to this sermon on our church website to think that I’m advocating political withdrawal or social passivism, as if all of us should simply step aside and let our country continue in the path that it currently is on. I am indescribably thankful for people at Bridgeway like Timothy Tardibono who leads the Family Policy Institute of Oklahoma. I’m thrilled that our own Stephen Black leads First Stone Ministries and the Restored Hope Network. We have people here at Bridgeway who devote themselves to the pro-life cause and help young women choose an alternative to abortion. We have people here who are involved in prison ministries and providing food and shelter to the poor. Others labor for reconciliation among the various ethnicities in our city. Some of you are actively involved in working with foster care and adoption agencies. The list could go on and on, and I hope no one is offended if I didn’t mention your particular passion or involvement. I applaud your work and hope and pray that God will bless it beyond your wildest dreams.

Are we clear? Good.

Now, let me return to the question that I’m so frequently asked:

“Sam, why don’t you talk more explicitly about these issues? Why don’t you take a public stand from the platform on Sunday mornings? Why don’t you preach sermons against abortion and Wall Street greed and racial hatred and political corruption, just to mention a few?”

Well, for one thing, I do. I don't make those issues into a series of topical sermons. But anytime that the biblical text speaks to those topics, whether explicitly or implicitly, I will address them. But there is another and more important answer to that question.

It comes in the form of a question to all of you. I've mentioned such things as addiction and bribery and racial hatred and political corruption. Here's my question. ***Where do these sorts of behavior come from? What is the underlying impulse in the human heart that leads people to engage in such behavior and to cultivate in their minds such distorted beliefs?*** Where does it come from?

You see, I'm asking the same question a good physician would ask of you if you came into his/her office and complained of an irritating rash or a painful left knee or chronic migraine headaches. You would hope your doctor would do more than merely treat the symptoms. You would hope that he/she would diligently look for the underlying cause and prescribe a treatment that would bring genuine and long-lasting healing.

That is precisely why I preach the way I do. It is the reason why we are moving at what some of you regard as a snail's pace through John 13-17. So let me put it in the form of a series of questions:

Why are people so greedy for material gain that they will bribe and steal and horde and gamble and embezzle and lie on their tax return?

Why are people drawn to a variety of addictive behaviors, whether drugs or alcohol or sex or shopping?

Why are people so inclined to buy into the nonsense being promoted by radical Islamic terrorism, or the nonsense that we hear so frequently on the part of our candidates for political office, or the nonsense that comes out of the TV or across the Internet or through Twitter and Facebook?

Why are people so filled with fear and anxiety and depression that they will turn to whatever silly and stupid remedy is recommended by the power-brokers and athletes and Hollywood stars in our world?

Why?

I'll tell you why? And don't think for a moment that this is just some superficial spiritual answer that you expect from people like me.

The reason is that people have lost confidence in the truth of the Bible. They are largely devoid of trust in the life-changing power of God's written Word.

Another reason is that people have refused to embrace the peace of heart, mind, and soul that Jesus Christ offers to anyone who will receive it. The reason is that people go to bed with troubled hearts and wake up with troubled hearts and go through the course of their daily responsibilities with troubled hearts and ignore the only solution that will help, and instead turn to every insane promise they hear on TV or read about on Twitter.

A third reason is that people have spurned the joy that Jesus offers and instead have run after worldly joy, whether it be found in sensuality, sexual promiscuity, the high that comes from a variety of drugs, or the obsessive pursuit of more stuff.

The reason is that people have chosen to put their confidence in the power of mere human beings and political programs and the promises of countless pundits and philosophers in our society and have turned a deaf and unbelieving ear to Jesus who alone rules with unchallenged sovereignty.

One final reason is that people have opened themselves to the influence of Satan and his strategies to undermine peace and joy and life and hope and freedom and forgiveness.

That is the reason why I choose to preach as I do on Sunday mornings. It is because of the spiritual realities that we see in a passage like the one we've just read. Think about it for a moment.

Jesus is telling his disciples that he's about to die and then rise from the dead and then ascend to the right hand of the Father on high. He's leaving them. Later in John 15-16 he will predict that they will suffer persecution and hatred simply because they identify with Jesus and his mission. Many of them will be beaten and imprisoned and eventually beheaded or stoned to death.

So what does Jesus say to them? What is his advice? There is much that he says all through the upper room discourse, but we are concerned today with what he says in John 14:25-31. And what he said to them, then, is what he also says to us, now. There are five things.

- First, believe in the truthfulness and the trustworthiness of the written Word of God, the Bible.
- Second, receive the peace that Jesus gives; not as the world gives, but as Jesus gives.
- Third, rejoice in the purposes of God. Find your joy in aligning your life and beliefs and behavior with Jesus.
- Fourth, believe him when he says he's in control of the future. Put your faith in his promises and power and sovereign rule.
- And fifth and finally, stand firm in what I, Jesus, will do to defeat the Devil. Be strengthened to resist him by trusting in the fact that I will defeat him by dying on a cross and then rising again from the dead.

And you say, "Sam, where is all that in our passage?" And I say, "Thanks for asking. I'd be happy to show you."

Two more quick comments. First, if you think that what Jesus said to them then and is now saying to us isn't politically explosive and morally transforming and socially progressive, then you are in for a glorious awakening. If you think that what Jesus is saying here is *unrelated* to the variety of social ills we face today or that his advice is *irrelevant* to the challenges we face in the political, economic, moral, social, educational, and international realm, you are in for a surprise.

Second, I find it amazing once again that on the night of his betrayal and just before his savage treatment at the hands of the political and religious leaders and only a short time before he will suffer the most excruciating death imaginable, ***he's thinking about his followers***. He's thinking about their welfare, not his own. His heart is moved with love and compassion and concern for them. Amazing!

(1) Believe in the truthfulness and the trustworthiness of the written Word of God, the Bible

(vv. 25-26)

The first thing Jesus said that is utterly foundational to everything else he'll say is found in vv. 25-26.

Why do you think Bridgeway is a church committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible? Why do you think I preach from the Bible verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book? It is because I believe what Jesus said

here in vv. 25-26. There are other statements in Scripture and other reasons that account for my approach to the Bible, but here we see one of them.

Jesus says to his disciples: “Men, don’t be afraid of forgetting all the things that I’ve taught you. When times get tough and you find yourself fuzzy and vague about something I said during our time together on earth, I assure you of this: the Holy Spirit, whom I told you earlier would be sent by the Father to dwell in you forever, he ‘will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.’ If you are afraid that when you sit down to write about it you’ll make a mistake, don’t worry. The Holy Spirit will keep you from error and will make clear to you everything that you need to say and write and communicate.”

I know it’s difficult for people in 2016 to understand this, but the disciples in the upper room didn’t have I-phones to take pictures or record lectures. So what assurance do we have that what they later wrote in the NT epistles is what Jesus really said and did? The assurance comes from the ministry of the Holy Spirit!

The Spirit will not make up things that never occurred. He will stir your memory, says Jesus. He will bring back into conscious awareness the multiplicity of things I taught in the Sermon on the Mount. It’s almost as if he is saying to the apostle John:

“John, let me single you out as an example. Many years down the road you will sit down to write a record of who I am, what I did, and what I said. You will want to make known to people everything you heard from me in what people will eventually call the Upper Room or Farewell Discourse. And my promise to you is that the Spirit will bring it all back to your remembrance and that he will teach you what it means so you can make it known to others.”

People often apply this promise to the present day, to those of us who weren’t in the upper room with Jesus. Is that legitimate? In one sense, Yes, and in another sense, No. First of all, the words were spoken specifically to the apostles and constitute a promise to them regarding how they would recall and write down all they heard from Jesus and saw him do. So in that sense it is not a promise that we today can apply indiscriminately to ourselves. But in another sense the answer is Yes, the promise is also for us. How so?

Look with me at what the apostle John, who recorded these very words of Jesus, said to all Christians in 1 John chapter two. There is no doubt in my mind that when he wrote these verses there was in his mind the words of Jesus in John 14. In this text John is telling them (and us) that many people are false teachers (he actually calls them “antichrists”). But we need not fear them and shouldn’t listen to them. Why? Because we have the Holy Spirit who teaches us:

“But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. . . . I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie – just as it has taught you, abide in him” (1 John 2:20, 26-27).

The “anointing” here is a reference to the Holy Spirit who dwells within us forever. And John says that we don’t need to listen to these false teachers because we have the Spirit who teaches us the truth about Christ. Notice closely: the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is in us. The anointing presence of the Spirit “abides” in us. And his

ministry is more than sufficient to keep us from falling into error or theological heresy regarding the incarnation and atoning death of Jesus.

OK, but ***what does John mean when he says that we have no need for anyone to teach us?*** This cannot mean that there is to be no official teaching in the church but only individual or private study, *for John is, in this very statement, teaching them/us!* Also, the NT speaks often of "teaching" in the church (Acts 4:18; 5:28,42; 2 Tim. 2:24) and of "teachers" (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:29). John's statement must be interpreted contextually. His point is that the original gospel truths which they received (v. 24) were not to be supplemented or altered by the "new" teaching of these antichrists. Any "new knowledge" or "revelation" must be tested or measured by the standard of the original proclamation.

The competency of the Holy Spirit is indicated by the words "is true and is no lie" (v. 27). Here, then, are the two safeguards against error: ***the apostolic message and the Holy Spirit, both received at conversion ("you heard" [v. 24] and "you received" [v. 27]). One is objective (the word, the message) and the other subjective (the Spirit). Both are essential.***

So, yes, the Holy Spirit continues to illumine our minds to enable us to understand the truth of Scripture. He instructs and convicts us. He guides our thoughts and preserves in our hearts our confidence in the truth of the gospel.

(2) Receive the peace that Jesus gives; not as the world gives, but as Jesus gives

(v. 27)

Here Jesus is talking about our experience. Note his emphasis on our "***heart***" not being troubled or suffering with fear. Jesus wants us to be fearless. He wants our hearts to be trouble-free. The world can't help us with this. The so-called "peace" it offers is based on physical comfort and wealth and power. The world wants you to believe that the only "peace" worth having is the kind that comes from having new gadgets and lots of money and perfect health and a hot body and circumstances that always work out in your favor. This so-called worldly "peace" is free from persecution and poverty and opposition.

But the "peace" that Jesus gives is the experience of a deep inner tranquility and calm and rest and confidence that is untouched and unmoved by adversity and opposition and bad health and persecution. We know this because of what Jesus will say later in the discourse in John 16:33.

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Note two things. First, this is the peace of Jesus himself. He doesn't just give us peace. ***The peace he gives is his own peace, the very peace that reigns in his own heart!*** This is an other-worldly, supernatural peace. Second, he says in John 16:33 that it can only be found "***in me.***" The world knows nothing of it. Those who don't know and trust and love Jesus experience a sort of peace that is dependent on life going well and people liking them and plenty of money in the bank. The peace that is found only in Jesus is utterly independent of all such things.

Think about it: Jesus is about to be arrested, savagely beaten, and nailed to a cross. Yet he has peace through it all. And that is the very peace he says we can experience right now, today, tomorrow, and forever.

So ask yourselves this question: What would our world look like if it were to receive and rest in this kind of peace? Is it not obvious that one reason people steal and hate and kill and lie is because they are devoid of the peace that Jesus alone can give?

(3) Rejoice in the purposes of God. Find your joy in aligning your life and beliefs and behavior with Jesus (v. 28)

What does Jesus mean in v. 28 when he says that "***the Father is greater than I***"? He doesn't mean he isn't God or that the Father is a greater Deity than he. I think he means that the Father did not humble himself and take to himself a human nature. The Father was not subjected to mistreatment and eventually nailed to a cross. The Father was not spit upon or slandered. The Father sends and I, in loving and voluntary obedience to his will, submit to being sent. The Father and the Son are equal in terms of the divine nature and glory and honor. But in view of the lowly submission of the Son in coming to earth to suffer and die as a human being, the Father is "greater" than he. But that will not always be the case. For we later hear Jesus pray this: "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:5).

You should rejoice, says Jesus, that I am about to return to my Father and experience yet again that intimacy of relationship that I had with him before the foundation of the world. In other words, the joy of Jesus in being near to the Father should be our joy as well. "Part of our joy in Jesus is Jesus' joy in his Father" (Piper). Rejoice, therefore, in me and in my relationship with the Father and in the promise that one day you will join us in our joy forever and ever!

What would our world be like if the joy of all people was in Jesus and in the joy that Jesus himself has in his Father? Would people turn to drugs for joy? Would they run after illicit sex for joy? Would they hate others in order to experience the joy of feeling superior to those who differ from them? No. The greatest gift you can offer to a world out of control and in moral chaos is the promise of experiencing the joy that is found in Jesus.

(4) Believe him when he says he's in control of the future. Put your faith in his promises and power (v. 29)

The "thing" that Jesus is telling them in advance is that Judas Iscariot will betray him into the hands of his enemies who will in turn nail him to a cross. We know this to be true because Jesus said virtually the same thing back in John 13:19 – "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he."

Jesus is saying: Trust that I am in complete control of the future. Judas isn't going to catch me off guard. I won't be surprised by his betrayal. And neither should you be. Jesus is sovereign. Jesus knows the future. So believe him and trust him when he predicts his own arrest and crucifixion. Judas isn't sovereign. Neither Pontius Pilate nor Herod nor the religious leaders of Israel are in charge. Jesus is. Evil does not have the final word. I do, says Jesus. So when times get tough and you think the world is careening out of control, remember that I told you what would happen before it would happen. So trust me.

(5) Fifth and finally, stand firm in what I, Jesus, will do to defeat the Devil. Be strengthened to resist him by trusting in the fact that I will defeat him by dying on a cross and then rising again from the dead (vv. 30-31)

When Jesus says that the time for talking to his disciples is short because “the ruler of this world is coming” he means that Satan is orchestrating through Judas Iscariot his betrayal and arrest and crucifixion. But the good news is that this should in no way frighten us or cause us to worry. Why? Because ***“he has no claim”*** on Jesus.

Now note carefully what Jesus is saying. He is telling them and us that the reason why he will ultimately submit to death at the hands of his enemies is because ***he loves the Father***. It isn’t because Satan is more powerful and has overruled the purposes of God. Satan has no claim on me, says Jesus. I have never sinned. I have never given him moral grounds on the basis of which he might bring an accusation against me. I am altogether free from his influence and judgments. So don’t ever think that Satan was in control of my dying. I willingly yielded up my life in obedience to the decree of my Father because I love him and I came to accomplish his will and purposes.

Listen to Jesus. It’s as if he’s saying to us: ***“Satan doesn’t control my life. Satan and his demonic hordes are not the ultimate reason I’m going to the cross. Evil doesn’t rule the night. Love rules the night! All that is about to happen is because I love my Father and rejoice in doing his will.”***

Don’t believe a word of those who say that our world today is headed for ultimate and eternal demise. It is certainly headed for judgment. And things will undoubtedly get far worse than they currently are. But that doesn’t mean God isn’t still in control. Nothing appeared to the disciples to be as horrific and bad and foreboding as the death and departure of Jesus. But Jesus assures them: It’s all part of my Father’s plan.

Likewise today. It’s ugly. It’s only going to get uglier. It’s dark, and will get darker. But God’s plan is immutable. God’s purpose to sustain us and bring us into his eternal presence cannot be overruled . . . not by other people, and certainly not by the so-called “ruler of this world.” Because the ultimate ruler of all worlds is Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

Do you understand now that I ***am*** addressing the social and political and racial evils of our day? Can you see now why the most effective and long-lasting remedy for the sinful impulses that lead to theft and murder and lying and hatred and terror and addiction is found in trusting the truth of God’s Word, and in resting in the peace that only Jesus gives, and in rejoicing in him and his purposes, and in trusting his sovereign power over all circumstances, and in knowing that Satan is but a temporary adversary whose day of judgment is soon coming?