

“WHAT IS THIS THAT HE SAYS TO US?”
Isaiah 66:7-14, Romans 8:28, 31-39, John 16:16-24
May 23 & 24, 2020 Are You the Christ Series #4

In our world today, there are many claims of who Jesus was for us. Was He just a good teacher? Was He just a good man? Was He just a man capable of doing miraculous things? Was He just a moral example for others to follow? Who was Jesus?

And that is the purpose of this series called “Are You the Christ.” We’re exploring who Jesus was, but also who Jesus IS for us as we put our hope and trust in Him. We’ve seen that Jesus was a confident, calm, compassionate and calling man as we looked at “What Manner of Man is This?” We see that Jesus is a man of great wisdom, astonishing the people of Israel as He exposed the nature of God to them, even as they questioned, “Where Did He Get His Wisdom?” And then we see that Jesus is a man of ultimate authority, given to Him from God the Father to invite us to follow Him so that we might regain a right relationship with God. Jesus is much more than what our society today makes Him out to be. He is our Savior, the Messiah, sent from God to bring forgiveness of our sins to the whole world, to all who will believe in Him and trust Him as Lord of their life.

Today we look at the fourth question asked of Jesus, “What Is This That He Says to Us?” This question comes once again from the disciples late in Jesus’ ministry. They have gathered in the upper room to celebrate the Passover meal, remembering how God had miraculously delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt using Moses as His servant. Jesus knew what was going to happen, even in the next few hours, so He wanted to prepare the disciples.

Having told them three times already that He would be arrested, tried, beaten and then crucified, And Then rise from the dead, Jesus tried to get the disciples to understand what His true purpose was in being on the earth. He tried to prepare them for what was about to happen, but unfortunately His words were more than what they could understand. So their question comes among themselves, “**What Is He Telling Us?**” I invite you to listen to it from the Gospel of John, chapter 16:16-24. (READ John 16:16-24)

Anybody who tells you that the Gospel is simple, has been very misguided. When we

seriously look at what Jesus is saying here to His disciples, we see that there is nothing simple about it. The more I look into the Scriptures in the Bible, the more I come to realize what I don't know. As soon as I think I have some concept of Jesus' teaching mastered, I find that it is only the small part of a huge iceberg of information that has yet to be understood. Many times I find myself asking the same question that the disciples did right there with Jesus, "What is Jesus saying to me about this?" As close as we get to understanding the Word of God, **Jesus always leads us deeper.**

Every time I read Psalm 34, or Psalm 51, or Psalm 145 and many others something new pops into my mind and brings me deeper into my relationship with the Lord. I review these chapters weekly, and yet something new always comes to me from the words on the page. So the words of the Bible are not static at all. Yes, they may be found in print right there on the page, but as we dive in to fully understand those words, their meaning opens up like an envelope, disclosing new truths and new challenges every time we read them.

And that is what we find in Jesus' teachings, too. As soon as we think that we have fully grasped all that Jesus is saying to us, He opens up the envelope a little wider to help us explore another deeper message to help us grow closer to God the Father. So it is not uncommon for us to question, just like the disciples, "What is this that He says to us?" And we come up with so many other questions: "What does this mean?" "How does this affect my life?" "Why is that important for me to know?" And ultimately it brings us to the question, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

But lest we get lost in the questions to the meaning and purpose of the Word, **Jesus explains it to us before we ask the question.** When He was with the disciples, Jesus recognized that they were too scared or too timid to ask what Jesus meant. They were mixed up about all that Jesus was telling them.

Jesus had told them about the Holy Spirit, that He would come to help them when the days grew difficult (Jn. 14:15-31). Jesus had told them that He was the real vine, the One who would give life to those who were connected to Him to receive nurture and support (Jn. 15:1-17). Jesus had told them that being one of His disciples would make them very unpopular with the rest of the world, and that they

would be hated because of following Him, even to the point that they would be put to death by those who would think they were doing God a favor by getting rid of them (Jn. 15:18-16:4). Jesus had told them that even in the midst of all of this, the Holy Spirit would give them the words to say and the strength to live in a way that would proclaim Him as the Messiah (Jn. 16:4b-15).

Now that's a lot to hear and comprehend all at the same time. Even Jesus said to them, "*I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear*" (Jn. 16:12). And it was already too much for them to understand. So as Jesus is saying all of this, the disciples are scratching their heads, going, "What in the world is He telling us?" They didn't want to look like idiots to Jesus, so they talked among themselves.

But Jesus knew that they did not understand. So He tried to make it clear to them. This was the night before He was going to be arrested, leading up to His trial and Crucifixion. There was much more that Jesus wanted to share with them, but they were on information overload. So their blank faces and their hands scratching their heads and their whispering to each other gives Jesus the clue that they don't get it. And we are the same way many times as Jesus pours into us. We just don't get it either.

So Jesus tells them, "*In a little while you will not see me any more, and then in a little while later you will see me*" (Jn. 16:16). And that's it – they are completely stumped. It's like being right in the middle of Algebra class and the teacher, who has been presenting new material, suddenly puts something out there that you have never heard about. You were loosely following along until the teacher presents this new concept, and BOOM! - everything stops making sense and nothing you do works. "What is this that he is saying to us?" But the teacher knows you don't understand. And he meticulously tries to walk you through the problem and works to help you get the calculation you need. He's right there to guide you if you would but ask him about it.

Or it's like filing your taxes the year after they made complete changes to the way taxes were figured. You thought you knew how it all worked, and then WHAM! - nothing makes sense any more. Everything is different and you find yourself asking, "What in the world are they talking about?"

That's where the disciples were. Nothing that Jesus was saying was making any sense to them, but He doesn't give up on them, but rather works so that they can grasp what His meaning is. Jesus couldn't come right out and say, "Hey fellas, tonight I will be arrested by the temple guards and tried for blasphemy, and found guilty to trumped up charges, and then be beaten within an inch of My life, and then be crucified by the Romans." They would not have allowed that to happen, somehow. But Jesus had already told them that was all going to happen, and they didn't get it. So Jesus tries a different route. "*In a little while you will not see Me any more, and then a little while later you will see Me.*" But that doesn't work either. "*What does this 'a little while' mean? We don't know what He is talking about!*" But to give the disciples a break here, we also ask the same question about all of what happened to Jesus. "Why did it all have to happen?" Yet here in this segment of Scripture we see four things Jesus wants us to hear and to understand. So **What Is It That Jesus Said To Us?**

First, Jesus calls us to **WAIT**. He says, "*In a little while...*" Now how many of us are good at waiting? Not many, if we are truly honest with ourselves. We live in an instant gratification society where we want what we want yesterday! We want to go to a car lot and pick out the one we want and drive it home the same day. We want to go to the concert right now, not wait for next week's event to happen. We chomp at the bit waiting for the new job to start. We can't wait until this corona virus pandemic is over so we can get back to "normal." For those still undergoing schooling, you can't wait until graduation happens so you can move on to the next step in your life. For many young folks today, they can't wait to get married, so they move in together. For many of those on the other end of the age range, they can't wait until they can retire. **Waiting Is Hard!**

And when Jesus calls us to wait, we say, "For What?" To the disciples, it was three days while Jesus was in the grave. For us, it's until He comes back again to take us to be with Him. Waiting is hard when we don't know what the future holds or what will happen between now and then. We are curious people and we want to know when, how much longer, and how it will take place.

But Jesus tells us again, "*In a little while...*" Then He gives this great example of a woman who

is pregnant who is eagerly awaiting the birth of her child. There's nine months to wait, and it can't come soon enough for some new parents. Every day the woman asks, "Is it time yet? How much longer? When can I get back to 'normal' again?"

Jesus wants us to experience the waiting so that we continue to grow in our faith. Though waiting can be tremendously difficult for us, we find Jesus encouraging us to keep our faith in Him. While many give up in the waiting process, Jesus calls us to be patient for everything to work out. Trust in Him that He has everything in control, and that everything will work out in God's time according to His purpose. Don't be too quick to move on – allow faith to develop along the way.

Second, Jesus tells us something about **PAIN**. Life has pain in it and we suffer with it. Our bodies get broken, or grow older, or develop problems and we find pain is involved. Our plans get ruined because of pandemics or struggles and often pain and disappointment are involved. Relationships grow old or get broken or become disappointing and there is pain and suffering. Pain is a regular part of our lives.

As followers of Jesus, we are warned that we will have pain as we seek to follow Jesus. In Matthew 10:22 He tells us, "*Everyone will hate you because of Me. But whoever holds out to the end will be saved...*" There's that waiting again, but there is also the pain. Everyone will hate you because you follow Jesus! Now does that mean we should not follow Jesus? NO! Remember Jesus' words, "*If the world hates you, just remember that it has hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, then the world would love you as its own. But I chose you from this world, and you do not belong to it; that is why the world hates you*" (Jn. 15:18-19).

In the illustration that Jesus gives about the pregnant woman, He states that when the time comes for the birth, there will be pain and suffering involved. Now when you are in the midst of the "birth pains", you can easily wonder, "When will it all end?" We can get so engrossed in the pain that we forget that it is a natural part of our lives. Jesus says, don't worry about it. It will only be here for a season, and then it will be gone. The birth will take place, the broken bone will mend, the relationship

will find new life, and even the dead will be raised to new life when they have faith in Jesus.

But there are times when the darkness around us in the in-between-time that we can feel it. In Exodus 10:21 *“the Lord then said to Moses, ‘Raise your hand toward the sky, and a darkness thick enough to be felt will cover the land of Egypt.’”* It’s that deep, dark, depressing emptiness that we feel when everything is up-side-down. It’s that ever present wondering when everything will be done. It’s that impending doom that we feel when we think that everything is completely exhausted and the pain is still present in our lives.

Yet Jesus tells us to expect the pain, and even embrace the pain, so that as we walk through those difficult times, we begin to depend upon someone much greater and higher than we are. You see when we are in the bleak darkness of life, God is still there, providing that little glimpse of light that gives us hope and provides us the strength we need to keep going. In the pain, seek out the Lord for your help! William Penn once wrote some excellent words that we remember some of. He says “No pain, no palm: no thorns, no throne: no gall, no glory: no cross, no crown.” (R. Benjamin Garrison, *Are You the Christ?* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978] pg. 57)

Certainly there will be pain in our lives, but it molds us into better people, into stronger followers of Jesus, and into the children of God, IF we seek the Lord’s help in it. Don’t waste the pain; find the Lord in the midst of it.

Third, Jesus tells us a little bit about **PRAYER**. As we wait on the Lord, as we endure the pains of this life, Jesus tells us, *“When that day comes, you will not ask Me for anything. I am telling you the truth: the Father will give you whatever you ask of Him in My name. Until now you have not asked for anything in My name; ask and you will receive...”* (Jn. 16:23-24).

God does not abandon us in the times of waiting and pain. He knows what is going on in our lives. He sees what we are going through, and He desires that we ask for what we need. He is pleased to supply His children with their needs when they ask Him. It’s not what we want, but what we need mind you. We could ask God for a million dollars and God will kindly replay, “Yea, right! Sorry, but

no!” God knows our NEEDS and He is quick to respond in the most outstanding and surprising ways.

“John Wesley has a neatly phrased comment on this. He says, ‘Our Lord gives us here a *carte blanche*.’ That means a white card, blank except for a signature, conveyed with the agreement that the receiving party or person is free to fill in whatever conditions he or she pleases: ‘Ask *anything* of the Father.’ “However, Wesley is not quite accurate in calling our prayer card *carte blanche*, because the signature affixed to it is at once a freeing and a limiting one: it must be ‘in My name.’ That is, it has to be signed by Jesus Christ; but some things cannot be asked or prayed for appropriately in the name of Jesus Christ.”

“What Jesus has done here really is to give us a new way to pray – praying by checking our petitions over against the mind of the Master...It is an essential ingredient of Christian prayer. When we use this phrase (through Jesus Christ our Lord) sincerely, we are saying that we will write on the card of our prayers only that which can be shown to the Savior without shame.” (Garrison, *Are You the Christ?* pg. 57) This means that we pray seeking the mind of Christ to be at work in the center of our lives. So we don’t tack on, “In Jesus’ Name” to our prayers and expect whatever it is that we prayed. To pray in Jesus’ name is to bring our lives into conformity with His teachings, with His will, and with His goal of Salvation to the whole world.

And this calls us to pray with a greater willingness to listen to the response from God. We don’t just rattle off a bunch of requests and petitions and then go on our merry way as if God were some divine vending machine – prayers go up and our requests come down. We need to take time to listen to God’s response. He may challenge us to review our requests to see if they are in line with His Will and His Way. He may call us to consider if our own life is in line with His teachings. He may call us to first make some major changes in our lives before He will begin to respond to our requests. Oh, God hears our prayers every time, but He is not willing to give us something that will harm us or prevent us from growing closer to Him.

Fourth, Jesus speaks to us about **JOY**. He has addressed the need for us to wait on God’s timing,

He has informed us that pain will be involved in our lives, but that we can gain from every struggle, Jesus has talked to us about the necessity and privilege we have to pray in His name, and now Jesus shares with us the great joy that comes from following the Lord. We are to do all things through Him *“so that your joy may be complete”* (Jn. 16:24). That is the end result that Jesus wants for us – JOY!

Jesus shared this several times when He was with the disciples on that Maundy Thursday night. He says, *“I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete”* in John 15:11 and then He says in His prayer to God the Father, *“And now I am coming to You, and I say these things in the world so that they might have My joy in their hearts in all its fullness”* in John 17:13.

Jesus wants our joy to be full, that is, perfect, so He invites us to come close to Him and follow Him so that we might experience the full joy of the Lord. That means that sour godliness is really atheism! We can't be full of Jesus and be disagreeable in our faith. We can't have the fullness of Jesus and then be bad-tempered or bitter or resentful. To have the fullness of Jesus is to be full of joy. That's His desire for us, to be people of joy!

Paul says it well for us today, *“I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us”* (Rom. 8:18). Even in the sufferings we face, we are to have the joy of Jesus within us. The woman giving birth experiences the pain of the process of birthing the child, but then has great joy that the child has been born.

Paul continues in Romans 8, *“...If God is for us, who can be against us?”* God wants us to have joy so He stands with us, even in the storm, to provide us with a rainbow to bring us joy. Paul goes on to say, *“...in all these things we have complete victory through Him who loves us! For I am certain that nothing can separate us from His love...”* (Rom. 8:37).

That, to me, sounds like a lot of joy to be had. If no one can separate us from the love of God IN CHRIST JESUS, then nothing that happens here can stop us from having the joy that God desires for us. So wait on the Lord, endure the pain, pray in Jesus' name, and have great joy in Jesus Christ. AMEN?
Amen!