

The Hope That Overcomes the World

Scripture: John 16:23–33

Code: 43-92

I want you to open your Bible now this morning to John's gospel. We have been, for months and months, in a very, very important section of the Bible, a very important section of this gospel – chapters 13 through 16. We now come to the final portion of that section. John 16:25 through 33.

And we're going to be looking at verses 25 to 33, and I will confess to you that this could be stretched out for weeks. But I'm going to condense it so that we can move on to chapter 17.

Before we look at the text itself, starting in verse 25, just a kind of a setup, if I might, for just a few minutes. The world in which we live, obviously, is bleak and filled with fearful people who are struggling to make some sense out of life. Their fears are personal, private, individual, but they are also collective. It's not enough that we have the trouble of our own. But thanks to the media, we have everybody else's troubles also to carry. There is a massive accumulated deposit of saturated issues that every person has to face. At the same time, we find ourselves struggling to face them because we're so bad at relationships. So, we lack real support. Trying to secure a meaningful, lasting relationship in marriage seems well-nigh impossible. Families are full of chaos and disintegration. Add to this decades and decades of propagating self-esteem and pride, and what you have is people who are consumed with their own desires and their own wants, who then double-down on the impossibility of making meaningful relationships because they're so self-centered.

The more materialistic the culture is, the more this becomes a reality. The more things we possess, the more things occupy us – the less significant our relationships become. If you live in an isolated part of the world where you have nothing but family, family takes on a completely greater significance.

There is a kind of pervasive angst in our culture. Even in the midst of all this material prosperity, in all of this supposed freedom, we are engulfed in fears, and anxieties, and doubts, and questions. And there is a kind of cosmic dread that looms in the lives of people in this part of the world and this time in history. People are searching for things that give them meaning, desperately searching while consumed with selfishness and self-consumption. They find themselves unable to be satisfied, to be at peace, and to have any lasting joy.

Now, let me simplify it. Deep in the heart of all people is a need for three realities. This is the irreducible minimum. Three realities. At the same time, it is the requisite maximum. There are three things people need. They need love. They need to be loved. They need to be loved unconditionally. They need to be loved lavishly. They need to be loved generously, and they need to be loved by someone who knows all their faults and still loves them that way.

Secondly, they need someone to trust. Someone to believe. Someone who's consumed with their well-being. Someone into whose hands they can place their lives who is powerful enough, and generous enough, and has the resources to secure them in the midst of an insecure world. They

need someone to love them, and someone to care for them, who has the power to rescue them from all their troubles.

Thirdly, people need hope. They need to know there's a future. They need to be able to see the light at the end of the ever-darkening tunnel, to know that someone has a plan, and someone has a purpose. And somewhere in the future, something good is going to happen, and it's going to be far greater than any of the bad experiences that occupy our lives.

Love, faith, and hope. Someone to love you. Someone you can trust, to care for you, to rescue you, to deliver you, to live you above your problems. And someone to give you a future. Love, faith, and hope. Sound familiar? That's the Christian triad. That's what is offered to every person in the gospel – the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul the Apostle, in 1 Corinthians 13 says there are these three: "Faith, hope, and love," and "the greatest of these is love." Often, the apostle Paul refers to that triad. A couple of times in 1 Thessalonians; again in Colossians and elsewhere. Those three divine provisions that come to us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are essentially what we need to live life with peace and joy. Peace is the sort of negative side. It's the tranquility. It's the absence of angst. It's the absence of anxiety. It's the tranquility in the midst of the trouble. Joy is the positive side. It's the exuberance in spite of it. Peace and joy come from these three realities.

Now, as we come to this text, our Lord is going to say the last few words to His 11 disciples. The words that He gave them on that Thursday night of Passion week the night before His crucifixion started in chapter 13, and they've run all the way now to the end of chapter 16. Very long, long, drawn out discourse by our Lord. He's made them all kinds of promises, given them all kinds of warnings. It all sort of culminates in their mind and the reality that He keeps talking about dying and leaving. And they are full of concern and full of anxiety. While He has been with them, they have had someone to love them. While He's been with them, they had someone to believe in, who has delivered them from every issue and provided everything they need. While He has been with them, He has filled their lives with hope.

But now, He's leaving. He's dying, and He's leaving. In addition to that, He has told them, "You're going to be persecuted the same way I'm being persecuted." You're going to be hated, resented, rejected, and this is going to go on through all of human history, to all the followers of Christ. People are going to arrest you. He says in Luke 21, they're going to turn against you, brother against brother, family against family members. The society is going to turn against you. Ultimately, they're going to throw you out of the synagogue, He says earlier in chapter 16 here. And they're even going to kill you, and think they do God's service when they kill you.

It's not going to go well for you. Why are they going to hate you? Because they hate Me. Why are they going to hate you? Because you're not part of the world's system, and they resent those who aren't. Why are they going to hate you? Because they don't know God, and they're the subjects of Satan. This is a bleak kind of moment for the disciples. Jesus is dying, He is leaving, and it's going to get far worse for us.

So, as He closes out this evening – by now, it's in the early hours of Friday morning, past midnight, the day of His crucifixion. They're headed for the Garden of Gethsemane. A final prayer of Jesus in

chapter 17. Then comes the arrest, the trial in the darkness of night, and then His execution in the morning on the cross. It's all coming to an end, and they are profoundly troubled. Several times in this text, John notes that their hearts were deeply troubled.

So, as our Lord closes in verses 25 to 33, He offers them comfort. And the comfort He offers them is built around these three realities. You have one who loves you. You have one who can be trusted with your life in time and eternity. And you have one who has planned a hope for you. Faith, hope, and love then dominate this final section. You wouldn't necessarily see that until you dig down a little bit into the text. So let's begin by reading it, starting in verse 25.

“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. In that day, you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.’

“His disciples said, ‘Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘You do believe now? Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.’”

How do you have peace in the face of all of this? How do you have peace in the face of Jesus dying, leaving? How do you have peace in the face of persecution and even execution? Martyrdom?

Let's start at the end. Go to verse 33. The last statement. “In the world, you have tribulation, but take courage.” We'll stop right there. Take courage. “In the world, you have tribulation.” What does “world” mean? Well, we've already looked at that. “World” doesn't mean the physical planet; it means the system of evil that dominates the creation, and dominates humanity. It is the satanically operated, demonically infested, sinner exercised world of evil. It is the complex of evil that dominates human life. And has not only dominated human life, but cursed the entire universe.

So, you just need to be reminded: that's where you live. You live in a system of evil. Evil dominates the world. The world is ruled by Satan. He's the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience – which is just another term for sinners. It's a satanically operating, demon infested world of sinners who practice the wretchedness that the fall has produced.

You're in that world. And, “In the world, you have tribulation.” The word is *thlipsis*. It means essentially, pressure, affliction, distress. You're literally going to be crushed. You're going to be pressured. You're going to be in a pressure cooker. You're going to be in distress. You're going to be under duress. This is clear from earlier words. Chapter 15, chapter 16. The world hates you. It is hostile toward you.

The apostle Paul acknowledged this later to Christian believers in 1 Thessalonians 3 verse 3. He

says, “No one should be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed, when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.” We are destined for persecution, destined for affliction. We’re not surprised by that, as Christians. All that will godly in this present age will suffer persecution – the New Testament says. First Peter 5:9. Peter says, “The same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brothers who are in the world.” We expect the world to persecute Christians because they persecuted Christ – even to kill Christians because they killed Christ. They hate us because we’re not of the world, and they don’t know God.

So in the face of this, in the face of this world of tribulation that these men are looking at, how do they survive? Triumphantly. How do they get through? To what did they cling? Well, our Lord says this. Go down to verse 33 again. “Take courage.” Take courage. Now, that seems like kind of a weak response, doesn’t it? Maybe some kind of a pep talk. You probably have had people tell you in the midst of your worst fears, and anxieties, and disappointments, and distress, and trouble – and somebody says, “Take courage.” And sometimes you want to whack them, as if they don’t even understand the depth of your problem with such a superficial answer. What do you mean? It’s a lot more complicated than that. Buck up, buddy, you know? That’s not going to work.

And there’s a reason that’s not going to work when you say it: because you have absolutely no power over the circumstances, right? It’s a nice gesture. Cheer up. But you have no power over the circumstances.

But there is one who does. When Jesus says, “Take courage,” that’s a different issue. There’s quite a remarkable use of the word here. It’s one word. “Take courage,” or cheer up, is one word: *tharseite*. One word in the Greek. It’s a verb form, and it’s in the imperative. It’s a command. Okay? Listen to this. Every time that word is used, and it’s used many times in the gospels and the New Testament – every time that word is used in the New Testament, it is in the imperative. It is a command. Cheer up. Take courage.

Now, listen to this. Every time it is used in the New Testament, it is spoken by Jesus. No one else ever says that in the New Testament. That is a whole different issue. If the Lord Jesus, who is in control of absolutely everything, says, “Cheer up,” that’s different. That’s completely different.

This is not just a well-intentioned pep talk. On the other hand, this is an absolutely divine promise. The disciples are distressed, to put it mildly. They’re afflicted. They’re pressured. They don’t know how they’re going to survive without Christ. He’s all they’ve known for three years. And our Lord says to them: “Cheer up. I’m going to tell you three things that should bring you joy. One, you are loved by God. Two, you are in God’s everlasting care. Three, God has a promise for your future.” You have love you have faith, and you have hope. You are loved by God. You believe in God. You hope in God. That’s all you need – to be loved by God, to be entrusted into God’s eternal care, and to have Him promise you a glorious future is all you need.

And I would just say to you this, that this is what every human on the planet needs. Why do people not run to Christ so they can have one who loves them, who is the sovereign of the universe? One in whom they can trust their lives, who is all-powerful. And one who gives them a future and a hope, who literally controls the future. Why don’t they run to Him? Simple answer: they love their sin. They love their sin. But for those who come to Him, He provides all that we need. To know you’re loved by God, to know you’re cared for by God. He’s taken the trust that you’ve given Him by believing in Him,

and He will hold you and keep you forever. And to know He has a hope for you, and He's in control of all things in the universe – that takes all the anxiety out of life.

I can just tell you: I don't think there's a minute in my life where I don't have a tranquil piece and a sense of joy because of these things, no matter what else is happening around me. And a whole lot is very often. Peace of soul comes from love, and faith, and hope.

Let's look at love. Verse 25. "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. In that day, you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf." Now, let me just tell you simply what this means. These things – what do you mean, these? Everything He said to them – not just the previous paragraph. Not just that night, but all the things He had been saying to them all along in three years of teaching and instruction, it was all about the Father. It's all about the Father. At the end of verse 25 – it's all of the Father. He has been revealing God. He's been revealing God. "I and the Father are one. I do the Father's will. I only do what the Father shows Me to do, wills for Me to do, tells Me to do." He revealed the Father. God is revealed in Christ. He is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In Him is the very wisdom and truth of God personified. John 1:14.

So, everything He ever said was to reveal the Father – to reveal God. But all of it was in figurative language. That's how the NAS translates it. Some translators say "in parables." Some say "in allegories." None of these words are really good. Figurative language is probably close. The word is *paroimia* in the Greek, and it basically means a veiled statement – a pointed but veiled statement. That is, a statement that brings some light but still has some darkness. In other words, throughout His entire ministry, the Hebrew word is – he spoke in *mashal*, *mashal*. *Mashal* is a veiled but pointed statement.

Jesus spoke about being the light. He spoke about being water. He spoke about being bread. He spoke about the temple and His body. He spoke about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He said things like, "Before Abraham was, I am." And even though there was some light in all of this, there was darkness surrounding it. There was a veil over this. And now, He's talking about dying, and rising, and leaving. Now, there was enough truth in everything Jesus taught to remove any excuse for not believing in Him. There was enough truth in what He taught to know that He was God, He was the Savior, He was the Messiah, and why He had come.

But, there was not always enough to understand everything, and He was speaking in veiled language because there were things that hadn't happened that He couldn't fully explain. The cross, the resurrection, the ascension, the sending of the Holy Spirit. He had said a lot of things about the Father, but there was still a veil. It had all been veiled. It wasn't a full explanation. It wasn't just because things hadn't happened, so they were not able to be explained. It was also because they were thick-headed. They had a hard time getting it, even what He did say. They were very reluctant to believe He would die and leave, because they thought He was going to bring the kingdom, and they had all of their personal ambition tied to that. They didn't want Him to die. They didn't want Him to leave. That was not in the plan. And so, they created something of their own veil, and then they were also veiled by years and years of instruction in Judaism that was an apostate form of Judaism that had created these expectations, but had failed to instruct them on the necessity of Messiah, suffering and dying and rising again.

So, at the present, they're not clear on a lot of things. Chapter 16 verse 12, Jesus said, "I have many more things to say to you, but you can't bear them now." "I can't go any further. We're going to have to get on the other side of the cross, the other side of the resurrection. And with the coming of the Holy Spirit before, you're going to fully understand."

You can realize this. If you were in their situation, you have no New Testament, and the cross hasn't happened, and the resurrection hasn't happened, and the Holy Spirit hasn't come, and you're trying to interpret all the things Jesus is saying in the light of what has not happened. But, He says, verse 25, "An hour is coming." "An hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father."

What hour is that? What hour is that? Well, you say, it could be after the resurrection when He met them on the Emmaus road and met them in the upper room and explained the Old Testament to them. Luke 24. It could be the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension when He spoke to them of things concerning the kingdom of God. But the best and most complete explanation of the hour is coming – is the hour when the Holy Spirit is sent.

We already know that He's promised the Holy Spirit – chapter 14, chapter 15, chapter 16, and always identified Him as the Spirit of truth. The Spirit of truth will remove the veil. "An hour is coming." In verse 26, it's called "in that day." In verse 23, it's called "in that day." That day. That day. That hour when the Holy Spirit comes. Pentecost, when the age of the Holy Spirit is launched. In the coming age, the veil comes off. The mysteries disappear. The *mashals* are over.

Now, think of it this way. Jesus spoke in veiled language. Jesus spoke in parables, right? And parables hid truth from people who didn't get an explanation as a judgment. Parables had to be explained to the disciples. Jesus used parables. It was part of His initial instruction. This interesting fact, you need to know: no one in the rest of the New Testament, from the end of the gospels, no one else ever gives a parable in the entire New Testament. No one. They're all direct, straightforward, simple, propositional statements of truth. The veil is off. Everything is unveiled. After the cross. After the resurrection, after the ascension. After the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in the life of the believer and be a teacher, and the Holy Spirit inspires the writing of the New Testament, where all the veils are removed – so that we have the book of Acts, all the way through the book of Revelation to explain everything that Jesus introduced in the gospels.

So, the hour is coming. The "hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father." That will be the Holy Spirit who, remember, is the Spirit of Christ. Christ comes back in the Spirit of Christ. This is the mystery of the Trinity. I'll speak plainly, and the plain speaking of the Spirit of Christ is recorded in the New Testament. Now we have all these 27 books that take out all the mystery and obliterate all the darkness and make everything light.

"In that day," verse 26, He says, "you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf." What does that mean? In that day you will be able to talk to the Father personally. "You don't need to come to Me and have Me request something of the Father for you." Well, that's been how their relationship worked up to now. Whatever they needed, they went to Jesus. And we see Jesus during His earthly ministry isolated time after time after time after time in prolonged times of prayer with the Father. What was He doing? He was taking to the Father the requests of His own. But when the Holy Spirit comes, takes up residence in your life, you're going to

be able to directly to the Father.

Look at verse 23. He already said this. “In that day you won’t be questioning Me about anything. You won’t be talking – I won’t be here, and you won’t need to ask Me. Truly, Truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name, ask and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.”

Now, when the Spirit comes, you will have direct access to the Father. This is really a stunning thing to the Jewish people. Because God was distant and veiled. God was symbolically in the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies – only a high priest could go in there, and he could only go once a year, and he had to get in and get out fast, or judgment might fall on him. He didn’t have access to God. But at the cross – you remember the veil was ripped from the top to the bottom? The Holy of Holies was exposed, and God was saying, “Everybody has free access to Me.” Everybody has free access.

So, Jesus says, “Look, in the dispensation of the Spirit, in the age of the Spirit, you don’t need to ask Me. You can ask the Father in My name.” What do you mean, “in My name?” Well, this would be how it would go: “Father, I’m here because Jesus sent me and told me to come.” You have that access. You have that privilege. That, according to verse 24, is “so that your joy may be made full.” Direct access to God.

This was absolutely alien to the Judaism of the time. God was distant. God was far away. You didn’t even talk about God as your Father. Maybe you talked about Him as the Father of all creatures, or the Father of the nation Israel, but you didn’t become intimate with God. And you certainly didn’t go to God and say, “Abba, Papa.”

But now, the apostle Paul in Romans and Galatians says, “When you go to God, say ‘Papa.’” You’re going to have direct access to God. You don’t need me to go for you. You can go. Now, that doesn’t mean that Jesus doesn’t intercede for us. But listen, He intercedes for us on the matters over which we have no insight and knowledge and wisdom. But what we desire from God, we have direct access to ask for. And if it’s consistent with the name of Jesus, the will of Jesus, the purpose of Jesus, the Father responds.

That alone sets Christianity apart from Judaism in a significant way. It also sets Christianity apart from Catholicism in a significant way. Catholicism is a kind of New Testament form of Judaism that says you don’t have access to God. You need somebody else to give you that access, like a priest. That would be an Old Testament perspective. But in Roman Catholicism, this is what the Catholic Church teaches. They teach and have taught for centuries that access to the Father comes only through Mary. Only through Mary.

Let me read Ludwig Ott. This is a Roman Catholic systematic theologian who speaks for the church. Quote: “Mary’s intercessory cooperation extends to all graces, so that no grace accrues to mankind without the intercession of Mary.” Did you get that? “No grace accrues to mankind without the intercession of Mary.” Continuing the quote: “The redemptive grace of Christ is conferred on nobody without the actual intercessory cooperation of Mary.” You get nothing from God. Mary gets it for you.

Jesus says, “You don’t need Me, let alone Mary. You can go directly to the Father in My name,” which is to say: “I come because Jesus invited me to come.” And you say, “Abba, Father, Papa.” You

Speak in terms of endearing familiarity. “You don’t need Me to make those requests. I will be interceding for you. I will ever live to make intercession for you on matters about which you know nothing. I will fight the battle on the divine level for you, but you have complete access to God.” Complete access to the Father.

Now you say, “Well, how could we ever be given such a privilege? How have we – are we some kind of noble people? How could that ever be granted us?” Now you come to verse 27. Here’s the point. Why do we have this privilege? “For the Father Himself loves you.” There we are at that first point: love. Why does all of this come to us? Because God loves us. God loves us so that we can go to Him and ask for anything consistent with the purpose of Jesus, and know we will receive it. What an amazing truth. What an astonishing truth. All of the riches of heaven are at our disposal. Every good thing God wants to grant us because of Christ.

Yes, God loves the whole world in a general sense, but He loves His own – remember 13:1? “Unto perfection.” He loves us in a special way. And it’s even more special than you would note from the English because the word for “love” in verse 27 is not *agapa* or *agap* as you hear people use it. *Agapa* is that divine, supreme, sacrificial love of the will. That’s not this word. This is the Greek verb *phile*. *Phile*, word for love that’s in the city of Philadelphia. Two Greek words: love and brother – the city of brotherly love.

This is family love. This is deep affection. This doesn’t speak about some universal attribute of God. This speaks about a personal affection. You might say it this way: it’s nice to know God loves you, but how much more wonderful is it to know that He actually likes you? He likes you. He’s drawn to you. His affections go toward you. He wants to lavish you with all the benefits and blessings that His affection for you can draw. And it’s present-tense. He continually loves you with a deep affection.

Yes, again, He loves everybody in the world. John 3:16. “God so loved the world.” But He has a special familial affection for those who belong to Him. I’m glad to be loved by God on some kind of divine level, but this is something beyond that. I’m really amazed that He has a warm and tender and deep affection, and He has it all the time, and it never wanes, and it’s affection that He reserves only for those who belong to Him. And as a result of that, He lavishes on me all the things that that affection has available. That’s – you can live life with that. I may not have a lot of people that love me, but if God loves me, and He loves me like that, I’m okay. I’m okay.

And here’s the good news: He loves us like that even though He knows everything about us. You can get people to love you if you don’t tell them everything. Right? As soon as you start telling them everything, the group gets smaller. But with God, He loves you, and He knows absolutely everything there is to know about you. All your unfaithfulness, all your critical spirit, all your bitterness, all your sin. But He likes you, and He has strong, unending affection for you. It’s just an incredible thing. And we say, “Abba, Father, I come because Jesus sent me to ask You for what’s on my heart if it brings honor to Him.”

Now, how did we get this love? Back to verse 27. “The Father Himself loves you – “ here it comes ” – because you have loved Me.” If you’re here this morning, you’re saying, “How do I get God to love me like that? How do I get God to lavish His affection on me and to care for me and to pour out all the resources of heaven on my behalf, even though I’m not everything I should be? How do I do that?” And the answer is clear as it can possibly be: “You have loved Me,” Jesus says. You love Jesus; the Father loves you. The Father says, “This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him. This is My

beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” If you love the Son that God loves, then God loves you. This is how you step into God’s love – by loving His Son. “Love My Son? Be loved by Me. Love My Son. Be loved by Me.”

Back in chapter 14 verse 21 – it’s good to compare. Jesus said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.” How do you know if you love Christ? ‘Cause you obey Him. You not only love Him for who He is; you obey Him. “And he who loves Me – “ verse 21 ” – will be loved by My Father.” There’s the same point. “If you love Me, My Father will love you, and I will love you, and I will reveal Myself to you.” And in verse 23, “If anyone loves Me,” again, “he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.” You want God to love you with lavish affection? Then love His Son.

By the way, that’s what it means to be a Christian. It doesn’t mean to belong to an organization or a tradition; it means to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to love Him with a love that leads obedient service and worship.

You want to be loved at the highest level? You want to be loved in the most magnanimous way? You want to be loved by the one who has the most to give? You want to be loved by God? Then love His Son. Love His Son, and you will live in the riches of that love your whole life. People may come in and out of your life, and love you, and turn against you, and disappoint you, but you will be loved by one whose love will never stop and never diminish.

If a person has love like that, he can suffer anything. Bring it on. Put me in jail. Kill me. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is – ” what? “Gain.” I just enter into the lavishness of eternal love. Hard to live without love. People need love – any kind of love. But why settle for something temporal, fluctuating, conditional, superficial, when you can be loved like this – by the one who knows everything there is to know about you, and loves you fully anyway?

The second provision that causes us to be able to cheer up, take courage, is faith. Verse 27. “You not only have loved Me, but you’ve believed that I came forth from the Father.” That’s so important. I can’t emphasize it enough. “You have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father. I’ve come into the world. I am leaving the world again. I’m going to the Father.” Do you understand that right there in those few simple sentences without a complicated word, you have the entire story of the incarnation?

What do you believe? You don’t believe Jesus was a good guru, Jesus was a good teacher, Jesus was a religious man, Jesus was a wise spiritual leader. No. “You believe that I came forth from the Father,” that He is essentially a member of the Trinity, that He is God who came into the world.

You believe that. The Jews didn’t believe that. The Jews said He’s from Satan. He’s got a demon. “But you believe that I came forth from God, and you believe that I came forth from the Father and have come into the world.” That’s the incarnation. “And now I’m going to do My work, and then I’m going to leave the world again and go back to the Father.” In other words, you believe that Jesus Christ is God who came down in human flesh, not born of Joseph and Mary, but conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit as God the Son. Lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death, rose physically from the grave, ascended back to heaven. You believe the gospel – the facts of the gospel. You believe it. This is the most simple, concise, clear statement of the purpose of Christ. It is the basis of

what we believe: that Christ came down as God into this world and did His work of redemption, and then went back to the Father.

Those few simple words sweep from heaven to earth, and back to heaven again. No hostile power forced Him to leave heaven. No hostile power on earth sent Him back. He came of His own will, and the will of the Father and the purpose of the Spirit. He did His work, and then He went back in perfect concert with the will of God and the mission the Trinity had ordained. As simple as these words are, they're infinite in the sweep that they cover – from God in heaven, Christ on earth, back to heaven. From eternity to eternity, and the incarnation in the middle.

This is the redemptive plan. This is what they believed. They didn't believe Jesus was just a rabbi, just a good teacher. They had earlier said, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are the Holy One of God." But this confession may literally go beyond that. They now know that He came from heaven, and He's going back to heaven.

You believe that. That's what you have to believe. If you believe that – if you believe that, you commit your life to God. If you believe that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, who came into this world to die as a sacrifice for sin, and to rise again to provide our justification before God, and ascended back to heaven. If you believe that, then you've put your trust in Him as Savior. God becomes your eternal protector. God will care for you forever. You're His child.

That love story is true. God so loved that He sends His Son, does the work, goes back and takes His place at the right hand of God. I like the response in verse 29. "His disciples said, 'Lo, now You are speaking plainly and not using a figure of speech.'" There's not a figure of speech in those statements. You came down, You do your work, You go back. That's very clear. "Now You're talking," they say. "Now we get it. That's not veiled. Wow. This is simple, simple enough for us to understand. The plan is clear. You came down. You provided instruction for us. And when Your ministry here on earth is done, You're going to go back. They didn't yet want to acknowledge that that ministry here included death and resurrection.

They're beginning to see some clarity. John Calvin said, "They might not have fully understood it, but the mere scent of this truth refreshed them." And they believed. They believed that He was God in human flesh. They believed that He came from heaven. And they make the confession in verse 30. It's amazing. "Now we know that You know all things."

Well, if He knows all things, then who is He? Who alone knows all things? God. This is a great confession. How did they come to that conclusion? They've been with Him three years. They knew He knew everything. He read minds. He knew what they were thinking. Back in verse 19, He says, "Are you deliberating together about this?" I know what you're thinking. He knew everything about everything.

So, omniscience was convincing. We know that You know all things, and You don't ask anybody anything. I mean, they spent their whole life realizing they were ignorant and they needed somebody to give them information. Jesus never asked anybody anything. Never asked anybody anything. He knew everything. You must be God. You must be God. "By this we believe that You came from God." That is the foundation of the Christian faith: believing Jesus is God in human flesh. They believed. They believed, and they affirm that belief.

It's like a high point, isn't it? Wow. You say, "Wouldn't it be great if the evening closed that way?" "You believe." And then we all celebrate.

It doesn't close that way. In verse 31, Jesus says to them: Jesus answered them, and some translations say, "Do you now believe?" But there's no difference in the Greek language, the original language, between an indicative and an interrogative. So, it could simply be this, and I would prefer this: "You are now believing. You are believing now. You are believing now." Really important. He affirms their faith. I don't think He questions it. I think He affirms it. You are believing now. You get it. You understand it. They're absolutely right. He did come down from heaven. He was going to do His work and go back to where He had come from. They did believe the right thing. They believed He was God in the world. And I think He affirms that. You are believing now. You are believing now.

This moment, you're believing. But that's not where the chapter ends. Then He says to them in verse 32: "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

There's another hour coming when they run. When was that? Just maybe a couple hours from this statement? They go into the garden, Jesus is arrested, and they flee. Zechariah 13:7 says, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep are scattered." Matthew 26 pictures them running. Verse 56, "They all fled." The disciples left Him and fled.

Was their faith a sham? He just said, "You are now believing. But an hour is coming when you're going to run – in doubt and fear." Was that faith a sham? No. It was weak faith. It was little faith – like the man who said, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief fill me up, get this faith to maturity." It was very important for Jesus to say that, so that when they did that, they would say, "Oh, that's exactly what He said we'd do." Which again affirms His omniscience, and it also affirms the fact – listen – that He knew they were true believers, and they were loved by the Father, even though their faith was weak.

The apostle Paul said, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful." Look, we'd like to believe that our faith is fully mature, right? Wouldn't you like to believe that? That no matter what trial comes along, whatever issue comes into your life, your faith is mature enough to rest completely, confidently in God. But understand, these are very, very young people in the faith. Their faith is weak. Jesus called them, "O ye of little faith." He says, "Look, I'm telling you. You're going to run." He said that to Peter, and Peter said, "Oh, no, no. I'll die with you." Peter thought he was a rock, and they were all just a bunch of pebbles. And they started running, fast.

Does this mean their faith wasn't real? No. It just means that it was just – it was weak. It was immature. It was in need of maturity and growth. They did believe, and they believed the right thing, but they overestimated the strength of their faith. I encourage young believers that the most helpful thing in your development is not to overestimate your strength. And not to overestimate your faith, and be afraid of your weakness. And live humbly.

But their faith was real, and it was tested. And when it was tested, they fled. But at the night of the resurrection – they fled on Friday. By Sunday night, they were all back together, and their faith, literally, was inflamed. And when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, they then turned the world upside-down. There's a maturing process. But they believed. And because they believed, God

kept them, and God used them mightily when their faith was strengthened.

Love? You can't live without love. And to be loved by the God of the universe? You can't live without a deliverer or somebody to rescue you from the corruption of the world, somebody to overcome the issues of your life. And if you put your trust in God, you have the promise that God will hold onto you even when your faith is weak.

And then lastly, hope. And that gets us into verse 33. Jesus said, "I won't really be alone when you leave Me, 'cause the Father is with me," always, obviously, because of the nature of the Trinity. But then He says this in verse 33. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace." "I want you to be at peace." That's His last words. "I want you to be at peace, so I've been saying this to you." What will bring you peace? Number one, to know that God loves you with an everlasting, and sovereign, and divine love. To know that you belong to God – your faith is the real thing, and God is your redeemer, your Savior, and your protector and provider.

But thirdly, your peace comes from this. "In the world you have tribulation, take courage; I have overcome the world." That's hope. That's hope. If you look at the world around you, you say, "What in the world is going on? How could it get any worse?"

Listen. He overcame the world. Past-tense. It hasn't yet worked out in time, but it's all planned in eternity. This is ultimate victory. The world will persecute you. The world may kill you, turn against you, "but I have overcome the system. I have overcome sin. I have overcome Satan. I have overcome demons. I have overcome the complex of sinners. I've overcome it all." He is triumphant. His victory is our victory. First John 5:4 and 5. "We are overcomers because our faith is in Christ, and we are united with Christ in His victory." Paul says to the Corinthians, "We always triumph in Christ." It doesn't matter how the world is going. He wins in the end. He wins. There is hope. There is absolute hope. "My beloved brother," in Paul, says, "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing your toil is not in vain in the Lord. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Do you want peace in your life, tranquility in the midst of turmoil? Do you want joy in your life, the positive exuberance to face life no matter how difficult it might be? Then you need to be in the arms of a loving God, a God in whom you have entrusted your eternal soul who cares for you and holds onto you everlastingly even through your times of doubt. And a God who has power not only over the present, but power over the future, and has already ordained that future and your part in that future – an inheritance undefiled, laid away for you in heaven.

You can live with that. Think of it. God loves you. God holds you. And God has a purpose for you in eternity to come.

Father, we thank You for our time together around this text – so much more here that we could talk about. But Lord, You've given us enough to thrill our hearts with your provision. In the midst of the bleakness of those hours as the disciples looked at the darkness, and it was a metaphor for what life seemed to appear to be without Jesus. Yet, there was a path to peace, and a path to joy, and it was to know they were loved by the God of the universe. They were entrusted into His eternal care, and they would never perish. He would never lose His grip on them, even through their times of struggle and doubt and scattering. He would hold onto them. And that there was a promise of an overcoming

future, a triumphant hope, a kingdom that was to come – the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. The kingdom on earth, and then the eternal kingdom in the new heaven and the new earth. These are the great promises of the gospel for those who turn to Christ. May we embrace those with joy and thanksgiving. In His name, Amen.

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