

## “Words of Comfort”

### *Until He Comes Series*

His Place HB

3/3/19

**\*The setting:** The Last Supper...Jesus is sitting with his disciples...and more than just disciples...but friends and brothers...sharing a meal in that culture is a very special and intimate thing...you only share meals with those that are closest to you...but this meal is a lot different than any others...it truly is the Last Meal that Jesus will have.

Before He would face the cross...before He would come face to face with death, hell and evil itself...He sits down with His brothers and shares an intimate moment and **He shares some incredible words with them that He wants them to know UNTIL HE RETURNS.**

Jesus knew this moment was momentous...the disciples didn't but Jesus did...life itself and even History moving forward would be forever altered by what was about to happen.

Think about it! Jesus knew that what was about to happen was the apex of human history...He knew that the disciples (and us) were about to experience the most thrilling ride of life...and at the same time because He was God, **He knew that the prophetic clock would begin ticking and time itself would begin ticking down leading up to the End Times and the Great Day of the Lord...also known as the Great Tribulation.**

So over the next number of weeks, I want you to sit at the Table of the Lord. Drink deeply and fill your hearts with the words He offers. You won't need a knife or a fork to partake of this meal...just **an open heart and a willing ear to listen to the life-giving words we all need Until He Returns.**

Here was Jesus' big declaration to His brothers while they opened dinner: **“I'm Leaving”**

Imagine how His words just hung there in the stunned silence! Their Master, Teacher, Friend, Brother...the One who radically and eternally changed their life forever...the One they had spent the last 3 plus years with 24/7 says **“I'm leaving. I'm taking off.” But even worse He says this...“You Can't Come With Me.”**

Jesus had spoke of this moment and intimated through His conversations and teachings with them that this day would come, but **as we know these disciples up to this moment just hadn't been able to discern what He was truly talking about...until this night.**

And the news just seem to be getting worse. Not only was Jesus leaving but they weren't invited at this time. Look at the dialogue between Jesus and His disciples...

### **John 13:33-36 (ESV)**

**<sup>33</sup> Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the**

Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

What a bummer of a dinner party!

Now they had a problem. A pressing question to which they had no answer:

**How would they make it without Jesus by their side?**

That question has challenged every believer since Jesus went to Calvary. It's a question that grows out of this great paradox of our faith: ***Our Lord is with us, yet He is away from us.***

Sometimes life feels like this very strange "in between time" from birth until we leave this world. A "No-man's Land" of waiting to be with the One we adore. One almost of a quiet spiritual and emotional pain...

We long to be with the Lord...but for now we must wait for His return.

So we find ourselves asking the disciple's question: **"How do we live while we wait?"**

***So in His own special and supernatural way, Jesus began to share with His closest friends...and also to you and me...the words we would need until He returned.***

These words would fill the void that the other two words of "I'm leaving" had created. They would guide and direct the disciples and us. They would enable them to live, at least for a little while, without Him by their side.

These were the words that Jesus shared:

**Words of Comfort**

**Words of Warning**

**Words of Encouragement**

**Words of Caution**

**Words of Excitement**

*\*Over the next number of weeks, you are going to hear what those words were. **You will be infused with great faith because the Great, Diving Parent preparing for a trip across the galaxy sits His children down and calmed their fears with His words. Word by word and phrase by phrase, He gave them and us the spiritual nourishment they would need in order to stay healthy and secure as we make our journey Home.***

They were words He wanted every believer to know: ***Don't Fear. Stay Close. Trust Me. And I'm Coming Back.***

Today as we look at the Words of Comfort that Jesus spoke that night, I think it is safe to assume that Fear on many different levels is something that we all have in common...especially about the future and especially at times when we think of our life leading up to the time that we get to Go Home.

***Fear rules us doesn't it? It takes control of our lives...dictates our relationship with others and more importantly God.***

***And Jesus knew the initial reaction of His followers would be fear when He told them He was leaving.*** So the first 3 things that Jesus wants every believer to know have to do with fear and how to overcome it:

***"Don't Be Afraid. Don't Stop Trusting. You're Not Alone."***

There is enough muscle in those words from Jesus to push fear right out of a human heart.

And they were spoken by a Savior strong enough to make them work in your life today.

Let's look at the first words that Jesus gave His followers: Don't be Afraid. Easier said than done right?

When Jesus said, ***"Don't Be Afraid"***, He was saying something much deeper than just those 3 words. He was really saying, ***"Don't allow your hearts to be troubled by fear."***

He was saying to them and to us "To take control of your feelings, because if you don't they will take control of you."

What does living in fear look like? ***It is growing accustomed to constant worry about our lives and souls. It is accepting the uneasy feeling that our salvation is not secure and our future is in question. It is a devilish compromise with doubt that makes inner peace impossible.***

***Living with fear also means resigning control. Slowly, the fears we accept start to direct our path. We adjust our routine to accommodate our fears and thus allow them to become our silent master.***

Fear robs of joy. It binds us in panic. It messes with our minds. It confounds our common sense. It whispers unthinkable terrors in our ears. Our minds invent visions of disaster:

What if I get cancer?  
What if my spouse leaves me?  
What if my children rebel?  
What if I'm not successful?

But the big thing that happens is that Fear takes control of our faith...it renders us ineffective in doing the very tasks to which the Lord has called us to...

**Talk to my neighbor about my faith?**  
**-Oh no, I'd be afraid to.**

**Stand up for my faith in front of others?**  
**-I'm too afraid.**

**Confront my wayward brother/sister about their walk?**  
**-I just don't think I could do that.**

Jesus would have none of it for His disciples and for us. He looked right into the frightened faces of His disciples and to us and He gave a command...not a suggestion:

**“Don't Give In To Fear!”**

From the beginning of time as we know it there have been 3 important facts about fear:

### **1. Fear Has Always Been Connected To Sin**

Fear started in the beautiful garden that God designed for humankind, His premier creation. It was an ideal environment. Everything that was needed was within reach without the stress and effort of man.

***And in that perfect place, man knew no fear!***

***The word fear is not even mentioned in Scripture prior to the first sin. Why? There was no cause for fear.*** Humankind lived in submission to God and in perfect harmony...which makes the temptation Satan offered all the more astounding and mind boggling.

***Satan had the gall to say that he could offer both Adam and Eve more????*** And isn't that exactly what he still does today?

So what happened? Eve looked both ways before crossing God's line and then took one tiny step, expecting ecstasy. How wrong she was. The product was nothing like the

advertisement. Instead of a utopia...she and Adam got run over by the biggest eternal Mack truck ever.

***Sin opens the door and fear enters. Sin destroys the foundation of our confidence by eroding our relationship with God and replacing it with fear.***

It leaves us feeling dirty, scared, and unsure of our salvation. Can God forgive me of this...again?

And why does fear take control so quickly? Where is its power?

## **2. The Power of Fear Messes With Our Focus**

When Adam and Eve had realized the gravity of their mistake, they instantly responded with fear.

What did they do? They tried to cover their bodies and they hid.

### **Genesis 3:7-10 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

***All of a sudden when sin wraps us, fear is its bed partner.***

When fear grips us we become unable to hear the words of Peace that the Holy Spirit brings. We lose sight of God. ***We lose our Focus and we sink.***

This lack of focus also inhibits our growth in Christ. When we feel nudged to take a step of faith, fear stops us in our tracks. ***Fear refocuses our eyes on the opposition and away from Christ.***

## **3. Conquering Fear Is A Matter of Choice**

Jesus never intended His followers to live in fear...in fact, He chastised the disciples for worrying about food and clothes and everyday necessities.

But He did give them what TO FEAR.

Look at what He said in Luke...

### **Luke 12:4-9 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup>“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! <sup>6</sup>Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. <sup>7</sup>Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows. <sup>8</sup>“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, <sup>9</sup>but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

***But the interesting thing about the Fear of the Lord is that when we do that...it isn't regular fear...He is calling us to put our respect, honor and an understanding of His greatness and power and authority of all things.***

Look at what that type of Fear produces...

### **Psalm 23:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

### **Isaiah 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup>“Behold, God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid;  
for the Lord God is my strength and my song,  
and he has become my salvation.”

### **Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup>The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;  
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

When we make the choice to place a Healthy Fear in a God that loves us, understanding that it is He that controls all things and wants only the best for His children...then it creates a different result.

**The key to keeping our hearts from being troubled is choosing whom to fear.**

So Christ gives this 1<sup>st</sup> Word of Comfort to His followers: ***Don't Be Afraid.***

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Word of Comfort that He gives to you and me is this...

**Don't Stop Trusting**

This is another word from Christ that is easier said than done. ***How does a person live in a world which disbelief is the standard and deceit is commonplace?***

What we usually do is doubt. Our whole life we have really been trained to Doubt because we have spent our life being lied to by just about everyone. And Jesus knew this.

***We question every advertisement, quiz every salesperson, scan every fine print, we look over the grocery store receipt...Why? Because we have been scammed and duped a lot of our life.***

\*Key: Then we come to church on Sunday and the preacher tells us to place our trust in a God we cannot see, who will take us to a place called Heaven that we cannot see, because of a Savior we have never met in the flesh who died for the sins we can't get rid of.

That's a lot to believe. We don't like to talk about the dark days of doubt that we all have. The days of doubt that press against our faith. The days where we truly struggle with tough questions:

**What do I do about these nagging doubts about you God?**

**How can I know You will be there for me?**

**Why should I trust you Jesus?**

While completely removing every inch of doubt that we may have throughout the rest of our life may never come if this life, there are some things that Jesus has done to prove to you that He can be trusted.

**Who Did Jesus Claim To Be?**

**John 14:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

**Matthew 28:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Those are huge claims! ***But just because the claims are huge or even outlandish to some doesn't relegate them to be untrue.***

***I'm glad that I have a Savior that confronts all men as He is: the Unique Jesus and Savior of the world, the Unexplainable Christ, the One who must be believed!***

And He invites you and me to trust Him. But then He allows us to examine the evidence for that trust!

## What Did Jesus Do To Prove His Claims?

Most Christians mistakenly believe that they cannot win the battle for faith in the field of facts.

But nothing could be further from the truth. ***The evidence in Jesus' defense is substantial and overwhelming!***

***Josh McDowell***, famous Christian apologist and author of the book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, says this: ***"There is more factual, historic substantiation for the existence of Jesus than for the existence of Plato and Socrates put together. Yet no one questions the existence of the philosophical giants of history. Christ's resurrection is the single greatest evidence for the trustworthiness of Christ's claims."***

There are so many things we could look at today that prove the existence of Jesus that we would be here all day, but for the sake of time I'll give you just this one quote from the well-known and well accepted Jewish historian Josephus (and not a Christian), whose writings are accepted as valid even from secular historians and non-believers:

Josephus, in the book *Jewish Antiquities* wrote:

***"At that time lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man; for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. . . .And when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the cross, they who before had conceived an affection for him did not cease to adhere to him. For on the third day he appeared to them alive again, the divine prophets having foretold these and many other wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of the Christians, so called from him, subsists at this time" (Antiquities, Book 18, Chapter 3, Section 1).***

You can't accept all of Josephus' works yet when it comes to his writings about Jesus go "Oh well that must be not true".

And if Jesus really existed then we must look at His claims and He claimed that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, and that He died, rose again in 3 days and would come back again for His people.

Those are huge claims. We know that the grave was empty...even secular historians note this. And if you believe that He wasn't really resurrected then you must answer the question: Then what happened?



The common response is that the body was stolen by the disciples, but the problem with that defense is that it has more holes in it than the claim of resurrection itself.

Look at the facts: ***The tomb was guarded by a special Roman Guard Unit that typically consisted of 4 to 16 men who had been trained since age 12 for one task...to guard 6 square feet of ground against an entire oncoming army.*** Any Roman soldier found asleep on duty was subject to immediate execution. That's some motivation to stay awake and alert on the job!

Who would be capable of ambushing the 4 to 16 highly trained and motivated Roman Elite Guards guarding the tomb and making off with the body? ***Most say the disciples.***

***Really??? You mean the ragtag group of fishermen, tax collectors and nobodies?*** The ones who just hours before were fighting amongst themselves for position only hours before Jesus' arrest? ***What did they do? Sneak up behind the Elite Roman Guards and beat them with mackerel and money bags???***

***And what motivation would they have for this?*** For riches? For power? ***These same guys who would've stole the body would become penniless paupers and fugitives from the law who would die horrific deaths by torture, beheading and imprisonment.*** That type of evidence and unsubstantiated claim wouldn't even add up in a regular court of law.

***This Jesus did exist...and He did die on a cross...and He did rise again...and that means that He was the Messiah, God's Son and Chosen One.*** Which means as well that His promise to come back again and to take you and me with Him will happen.

But here's what it also means...***Here's the promise that He made to you and me that also must be true and is the greatest Word of Comfort as we live a life that is too hard for us to deal with:***

## **You Are Not Alone**

Satan wants you to believe that you are alone and have been abandoned, left at the doorstep by Jesus because we don't measure up. Satan wants you to believe that you aren't good enough or smart enough or holy enough to deserve God's love.

He wants you to recoil in shame and believe that God wants nothing to do with you and that He definitely won't be there for you.

Jesus understood the lies of the enemy and our deep need for contact and comfort. Look at what He said:

## **John 14:18 (ESV)**

***18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.***

### **John 14:16-17 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

### **John 14:1-3 (ESV)**

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Do you see what Christ has done for us? You and I can be at peace with Christ anytime and anywhere. We have a Savior, Hero and Friend that is Always With Us.

It matters not whether we are chained up by addiction, in an abusive relationship, on the wrong path in life, trapped in a lousy job, feeling lost, trapped in a body that leaves us feeling defeated and depressed... You have a Savior that is Alive, Present and waiting with a bent ear to hear your request and to answer.

**You Are Not Alone...He Is With You Always!**

**Close with Altar**