

The Home of Your Heart

John 14:15-31

KV 23: “Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.’”

You can usually find out a lot about a person by observing what their house looks like. When you go to someone’s house, you might find pictures of their family, or a frame with a Bible verse in it. That person might be a family man and a Christian. In another person’s house you might find beautiful pictures of the city and flowers. That person might be a good photographer. In a student’s dorm room you will find piles of text books, CDs and posters of their favorite celebrity or TV show, and sometimes behind the closet an entire shoe rack full of shoes. Usually this is a person who is not married and/or has no children yet. Now, imagine that your heart is like a home – what would people see?

Recently, our ministry purchased a house about a block away. Our vision is to use it to carry on the work of God in prayer or fellowship meetings, Bible studies and more. However, it was abandoned for several years, and during that time a water pipe burst, causing mold to grow all over the walls, floors and doors. Some of the floorboards have warped. In this condition, the house is not suitable for use, and it is illegal to have people live there, let alone meet. In order to redeem the house, we need legal and professional help. In its current condition it cannot be used for the glory of God. What is the condition of your heart? Is it troubled? Is it anxious or fearful, like the warped floorboards? God Himself has offered to restore your hearts and make it into a place fit for a king. If you will trust God, he can redeem your heart and restore it, so that it can be used for his glory.

In today’s passage we continue with Jesus’ words to bring comfort to his disciples. They were troubled in heart, for many reasons. Their beloved Teacher will very soon be betrayed into the hands of the religious rulers and sentenced to be killed. He was supposed to be the Christ, the chosen one of God. In Jewish thought the Christ would not die (John 12:34), so the disciples could have been troubled about this. Also, Jesus had just revealed that Peter, one of his beloved disciples, would disown him 3 times. All this was spoken during the Last Supper, and the rest of Ch. 14 are his last words before they exit the upper room. The disciples loved Jesus, and the main reason why they were grieved was because they thought they were going to lose him. It’s very natural to feel sad when you know that someone you love dearly is going to go away, but the disciples are loving Jesus as a man. Jesus here is trying to teach them to love Him as God. From this passage you can learn what it means to love God, and first you will see that if you love God, you will obey his commands, second, you will *see* God, and third, He will come and make his home in your heart.

First, if we love God, we obey his commands. Look at v.15, Jesus says to his disciples, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” How many find this hard to accept? Generally, if you are of a younger generation and from a Western country, obey sounds like a bad word. It has this connotation that an oppressive boss or superior is imposing their will on you. And in this individualistic society where love is this “free-flowing” idea or concept, that “I will love whoever makes me feel happy,” it’s hard to see how that relates to love. Or, if you are of an older generation, maybe from an Eastern nation where the society is more structured,

obedience is not a bad word, but it is often done out of duty, and not always from a sincere heart. These are not the ideas of obedience Jesus is talking about. When Jesus says “If you love me, you will obey what I command,” it is an obedience that comes out of love. Love is the root, and obedience is the fruit of that love (Matthew Henry). For example, when a father or mother makes a rule, “Don’t run out into the street,” “Don’t stick a fork in the electric socket,” or, “Finish all your homework,” it is out of a sincere desire for the well-being of their child. The child, in return, out of a trust in their parents, obey. They obey because they love their parents, and know that their parents love them.

Trust is foundational to love, and therefore it is also foundational to obedience. To love God, we must trust Him, but the fact that it is so difficult to trust God is evidence of our sinful hearts. In Genesis, God created the heavens and the earth, and he created mankind, both male and female. He blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground (Gen 1:28).” He gave them everything, the whole world was theirs, and he gave Adam, the first man, this one command: “You are free to eat from any trees in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” Then the devil came to tempt Eve, his wife, and planted doubt in her heart. He planted mistrust in her heart against God. She did not trust that God provided enough for them, and she thought God was holding wisdom back from them, so she ate it. She gave some to her husband, and he ate it (Gen 3:6), and together they deliberately disobeyed God. All of their children, down to you and me, inherited sin: an inherent selfishness and distrust in God.

Now why is it so important to obey God? In this chapter, Jesus speaks of obedience 5 times. Throughout the Bible, only those who obeyed by faith were blessed by God. Abraham obeyed God, and left his father’s house. Moses obeyed God, and performed extraordinary miracles to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. King David obeyed God, and slain a giant and became Israel’s greatest king. Throughout the entire Bible we cannot underestimate the importance of obedience to God. This is because God is the author and source of life – He is the Creator, and we were not meant to live without him. When we go our own way, it always inevitably leads to death. We like to think that the world revolves around us, but we are living in God’s world, in God’s universe and we are his creation subject to him. God cares for all of his creation – he provides food for the lions and the ravens, he knows when the mountain goats will give birth (Job 38-39). King David says in Psalm 139:14, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Jesus tells us in Luke 12:7, “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” God knows you inside and out, he knows you better than yourself, and he wants you to live, that’s why you need to obey. God is not some oppressive slave driver who just wants you to obey him – he is your heavenly Father who cares for you.

We can obey God when we trust in Him. Jesus said in the previous passage, (14:1) “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” We must trust that like a loving Father, he knows and wants what is best for us. Sometimes that isn’t necessarily what we want. A child might want to eat a chocolate bar for dinner, but that’s not healthy or good for the child. We must trust that He loves us, so we can love Him (also see 1 John 4:19). We don’t obey out of a sense of obligation, but we obey out of the love we have for God.

Second, if you love God, you will see God. God is able to make our love grow for Him by revealing Himself to us more and more. Has anyone ever said to you, “I will believe in God if I see him with my own eyes.”? Has anyone ever asked, “If God is real, why doesn’t he just show up like a big face in the sky?” Well, Judas (not Judas Iscariot), asked a similar question to Jesus. In v.19, Jesus tells his disciples that before long, the world will no longer see him, but his disciples will see him. Then in v.22, Judas, (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” He thought that Jesus would come back physically once and for all, and then show himself to the world. Judas was confused that Jesus would return, only to show himself to those that knew him. The Scriptures say however, that Jesus must first ascend back into heaven – so when Jesus shows himself to us today, it’s not a physical manifestation, but a spiritual manifestation in our hearts.

God will not show himself to this world right at this time because he must be discerned spiritually by faith. Look at v.16-17, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him.” The world refers to anyone who does not believe in God. They cannot see God because they reject God. I Cor 2:14 says, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” About a year ago I spoke with an agnostic. Agnostics are those who will not say there is no God, but believe it is impossible to know if there is a true God. For him, the primary basis of life is survival, laws are made, societies are organized so that it will minimize the harm people do to one another. But what happens to life after death, either we don’t know, or we just go into nothingness. The concept of eternal life, heaven and hell, true love and grace are but foolishness to him, and without the Spirit of God he cannot accept these things.

God will show himself to those who love him. Look at v.21, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” There is a great benefit to loving God! When we love God, we are loved by Him, and not only Him, but Jesus too! We know that we love because He loved us first (1 John 4:19), and that is true. I was invited to Bible study on my way to the library when I was in High School. For some new Christians among us, God may have answered your prayer for a job. I believe this was his answer to prayer, in order to draw you in, in order to reveal himself to you that He exists. Now what shall be your response? Love Him! Love God, and obey his commands. As you love him, he will love you, and this relationship grows deeper and deeper.

Jesus shows himself to us in two ways. First, we see the evidence of his work within us, and then we see the evidence of his work around us. Within us he causes us to love him more, to desire him more, to desire to know him and obey him. He helps us to understand spiritual things, for example, he teaches us the reality of our sin. He teaches us that our purpose in life is to glorify him. He teaches us to be humble, and to love one another. The evidence of seeing Jesus is a transformation of your life to become more like Him. Second, we see the evidence of his work around us. I am encouraged to hear testimonies from some of our new students who have put their faith in God, and I was also encouraged to see that even among existing members of the ministry we have become more active in meeting together and encouraging one another. Let’s

all continue to pray collectively for each other, for our pastor and elders, and for God to continue to work to save many souls at IIT through us.

If you love God, you obey his commands. If you love God, he shows himself to you, but there is an even greater promise than this. This brings me to the third and final point – if you love God, he will come and make his home with you. Can we all please read v.23, “Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.’” Your body is the permanent home of the Triune God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Your body is the permanent home of the Creator of the Universe, the author and source of life. You are God’s temple and God’s Spirit lives in you (1 Cor 3:16). God is not taking out a 6-month lease on your heart. He is not bringing his sleeping bag for a camp out. He is moving in, forever.

This was a great comfort to the disciples. They were troubled in heart because they thought they would lose their Master. They were troubled in heart because they were not sure what would happen to their lives when Jesus would go, but Jesus promised them: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you (18).” Though they would lose their physical Master, they would gain the resurrected Jesus, and His Father and His Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus had to go die: to reconcile the world to God and make peace between God and men. The only reason God can come to your home, in your heart, is because Jesus washed away those moldy sins by his blood. He reversed the curse of Adam and Eve. We inherited a disobedient nature from them, but Jesus offered his perfect, obedient life and gave that to us. That is why in v.28 Jesus says, ‘If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.’” They had no need to despair, no reason to be sorrowful – because the death of Jesus meant salvation for sinners. His resurrection would spell victory over death and victory over our enemies.

What are the benefits of God coming to make his home with you? First, you have the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, who will teach and remind you of the things Jesus has taught. How is it that you can obey God and keep his commands? It’s through the help of the Holy Spirit. He will teach you and remind you of the laws of God to help you walk and abide by them. Eze 36:27 says, “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” You will also receive the gift of peace. Look at v.27, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Our Lord didn’t take silver or gold with him, when he was here on this earth, silver or gold he did not have, but he gives us a treasure far more valuable – with value in this life and the next to come: that is his peace. He has made peace before men and God, and if God is for us, who can be against us (Rom 8:31)?

This is the true peace we receive. Often when we are troubled, we try to look for artificial things to give us peace. Some have looked to drugs, others to alcohol, others to video games or entertainment, but the true and real peace is the peace of God. Peter, the disciple who denied Jesus, was forgiven and received Jesus’ peace. The night before he was to go to trial and possibly sentenced to death, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance (Acts 12:26). An angel helped him escape, but imagine, he was sleeping the night before he could potentially die!

What are the results if God does not come to take residence in your heart? If you do not love God, you cannot know God, nor will he send his Counselor to be with you and come to live in your heart. Then, it will be like the house mentioned at the beginning. While you can try to clean it yourself, you will never be able to get rid of all the mold. You need the cleaning power of a professional mold remover. Likewise for your sins, you need the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. The house cannot be used as a house of worship or meeting unless it meets the requirements of the law. Likewise, the home of your heart cannot be used for the glory of God unless the Counselor will teach you God's laws and enable you to abide by them. Turn to God, call on him for help, trust in Him, and He will come to clean your house and make his home in it.

Jesus reminded the disciples over and over again in this passage that if we truly love him, we will obey his teaching. It is through this obedience that we show our love for Him, and he reciprocates by showing His love for us by being with us. When he comes to live in our hearts, we don't just rest, but continue to press on, we continue to obey, and we continue to grow through obedience. In Rev 2:4-5, Jesus rebukes the church at Ephesus. He commended them for doing many great things, but he said in v.4-5, "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place." Let us be diligent in not forsaking our first love, our Lord Jesus Christ. He said in v.31, "but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me." As we continue to obey, let us be testimonies to the world that Jesus loves the Father and does exactly what God has commanded, and also show the world that we love Jesus. Through love and obedience to God, the hearts in our homes can be used for God's glory.