

Don't Tell Me The Answer

John 14

I am puzzling over this passage
This passage that of Jesus just before he dies,
At this point he has less than 24 hours to live
This is one of the very last conversations that Jesus will have with his friends.
And it's complicated stuff,
It goes all over the place,
And I think sometimes we just need to stay with it.

It has to stay in its perplexing, question asking, slightly confusing form
To be true.
I could break it down into sections - and I am going to slightly
Draw some themes, give it a framework that makes it slightly easier to remember
But in doing so,
I'll know it out of shape.

I feel like a bit like a moment this week when I was doing Higher Maths revision with Zoe
And we were doing Logarithms
This slightly magical functions, invented by James Napier, the mercurial mathematical Scotsman
We were puzzling over a question, and I opened my mouth to say something
And Zoe's words were "Don't say anything".

That is kind of what I want to say with these passages here - don't say anything
Don't say it
Just sit with it.

These are words that Jesus did say,
Just before he died,
And in coming to terms with Jesus' post-resurrection life, these are words that we need to go
back to.

So go back to them...

What strikes you?
What speaks to you in these words here?

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. **2** My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Jesus the Way to the Father

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **7** If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10** Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. **11** Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. **12** Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

So what speaks to you, what makes you ask questions...

Let me draw out some things.

The first part, hinges on these words rooms, these rooms that Jesus goes to prepare for us. Because you see this has a few questions...

The first is because Jesus didn’t as far as we see come back for the disciples. So if he didn’t come back for them how does this work?

Well some people have said it's because this now happens when we die,
That's a later reading.

And then another problem, is that this seems to be that later on in the chapter, Jesus doesn't talk about coming and bringing us to God, but rather coming into us here and now...

John 14:23

"Jesus answered him 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our with them'".

So which is it - us going to God, or God coming into this.

One way that people have thought about this, which does kind of help is to think of the word "Room" not as a place, but rather as a new form of closeness.

You see the word for room, or mansion, is actually very similar to the word remain,
And so what Jesus is saying that he is going to prepare a new way of remaining in the Father
Now I don't always like to resolve tensions too easily, but that does seem to speak of a new way of being, a new union - I am going to give you a new place within God.

Let make an even cruder analogy from Psalm 40.

In Psalm 40, there is a line that says
"Sacrifice and offering you do not desire
But you have given me an open ear
Sin-offering and burnt-offering you have not required"

Now this phrase, you have given me an open ear, is a toning down of the Hebrew
Actually it is quite crude, it says "You have dug an ear of me"
Literally, God has gone to special place within God, that is only for me, and dug an ear for me
There is a part of God that is dedicated to listening to me.

And similarly what Jesus is saying, that there are many remaining places, within God,
He creates almost now a place for us in relation with God, that is only God and me,
That God who is infinite has created infinite space for relationship with him.

Augustine had a nice way of speaking about this verse, this creation of a place for us, he said
"He prepares the dwelling places by preparing those who are to dwell in him".

Way...

Now the second thing I want to draw attention to is the word Way.

Way with Jesus could mean "Way of being"
Loving like Jesus.

Or it could mean Way of the Cross

But the very obvious way here is "Way to the Father"
He is the way,
He is the way home, the way to be where we need to be.
We look to him.

Let me show you a picture of a special cairn.
This is up on the Camserney/ Shenavail road,
And it is the way which takes you down to Weem and to home
And it is hard to spot. The first time I was up there Angus gave me directions, but still I missed it -
I went up and down the track trying to find it, until eventually I did, this small pile of stones,
And that was my way home.

Now lets park questions for the moment about whether Jesus at this point is starting a religion
against all others, and the problems of that...

Rather in this life, our life, it is saying simply that Jesus is the way to the Father.

Your job is to be with the Father, and he is the way there... he is the way of getting there.

What does that mean - I think that means speaking to him, looking to him
From wherever we are in life
The job is to get to the Father, to get to that room
And he is the way
His example is the way
Talking to him is the way
His presence is the way

And on that way he leads us also to life and to truth and to God.

No matter what point you are at in life - he is the way,
He is the way.

Imagine him with you right now,
And simply say to him - Show me! Please show me.

Possibility

This final thing, is this verse here, verse 12, one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible.

Jesus is saying that can do greater things than Christ - what does that mean?
Who here has raised Lazarus from the dead
Or who here has turned water into wine?

The challenge here is great - I think this is partly about scale- that the Church as a whole can reach more people, than Jesus being bound in Palestine.

There is also something about the fact that Jesus power almost became too much for people, that is why he kept having to keep things secret - somehow our under the radar approaches can help people love.

And I think part of this is aiming to big, being more, praying more, trusting more,
Coming to God with the big big prayers,
For renewal, for us to be changed.

Look at the number of times this appears in the Bible...

John 14:13 - Whatever you ask in my name, I will do

John 14:14 - If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it

John 15:16 - Whatever you ask in the Father, in my name, he will give it to you

John 16:23 - If you ask anything of the Father, He will give it to you in my name

John 16:24 - Ask and you shall receive

John 15:7 - Ask for whatever you want and it shall be done for you

John 16:26 - On that day you will ask in my name and I do not say that I shall have to petition the Father for you

1 John 3:21-22 If conscience knows nothing damaging, we can have confidence before God and receive from him whatever we may ask, because we are keeping his commandments and doing what is pleasing in his sight

1 John 5:14-15 No we have confidence in God that he Hears us whenever we ask for anything according to his will. And since we know that he hears us whenever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours

There is a boldness to all of this,
A seeking
A dependence
A preparedness to risk massive disappointment

But something in this is about relationships, trust, dependency, hoping for more, believing that the Father can move.

And there are unanswered prayers, and yet, somehow we still pray for the knowing of this, and the becoming of all of this.

For the great big big walls in all of our lives to be overcome
For the prisons which people find themselves to be changed
And yes for healing miracles too, for those great miracles to happen...

What, what what is the biggest dream - that is the question,
What, what is the prayer that you have
Pray and watch what happens
Go for the big ones, dare to have those,
And then just watch.

So we have said the this is about a place in God, in the Father
We have said that this list trusting in Jesus to be the way to the Father
And this is about having the big dreams, the big thoughts.