

The Glory of Jesus' Suffering, Death, and Resurrection

Lesson Two

The Counselor Who Comforts His Own

The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. (Isaiah 50:4)

1. The Counselor comforts us with the knowledge that an eternal home awaits us
2. The Counselor offers us another Counselor
3. The Counselor promises that we will produce the fruits of faith
4. The Counselor assures us of triumph, even in persecution
5. The Counselor intercedes for his own

Worship

Read responsively Isaiah 50:4-7. (Words of God the Son)

A: The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue,

B: To know the word that sustains the weary.

A: He wakens me morning by morning,

B: Wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

A: The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears,

B: And I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.

A: I offered my back to those who beat me,

B: My cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;

A: I did not hide my face

B: From mocking and spitting.

A: Because the Sovereign LORD helps me,

B: I will not be disgraced.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we thank you that you know the Word that sustains the weary. As we struggle in the midst of an unbelieving world, we grow spiritually weary. Use today's lesson to renew in us the joy of our salvation. Inspire us to love one another as you have loved us, that all may know that we are your disciples. We ask this to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Introduction

Scripture reference:

John 14-17

What does a parent do when suddenly, in the middle of the night, a young child has a bad dream and wakes up screaming? Instinctively, the parent rushes to the child's bedside to soothe and comfort. The parent assures the little one that what was so terrifying was only a dream. The parent convinces the child that everything is all right.

That last Passover evening the disciples were shaken by what they had heard. In the upper room and later in Gethsemane, Jesus revealed that

- one of them was going to betray him,
- Peter was going to deny him three times,
- all of them would run from him in his hour of suffering, and
- a time of difficulty and persecution was fast approaching.

If only it were a bad dream from which they would awaken!

It was not a dream, however. These things would really happen. Nevertheless, Jesus gave his disciples comfort. He assured them that they could take heart, for although they would have trouble in this world, their Lord Jesus had “overcome the world” (John 16:33). Everything would end up all right—forever.

We live in the same unbelieving world as the apostles. Through his Word, Jesus has told us also that “we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Yet we can be thankful that Jesus’ comfort for his disciples is for us too. We will learn about this comfort in today’s lesson.

Background

From what we can tell from Scripture and early church history, John wrote his gospel long after the other evangelists (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) had completed their work. As the Holy Spirit inspired John to write, he led John to record many words and events from the ministry of our Lord Jesus that the other evangelists chose not to record. In keeping with that pattern, John presents us with the most extensive treatment of Jesus’ words and actions on Maundy Thursday. He records for us Jesus’ powerful and comforting words to his disciples before he is arrested and crucified.

The Counselor comforts us with the knowledge that an eternal home awaits us

Read John 14:1-14.

Jesus had told his disciples that he was leaving them. Now he urges them to realize that his leaving was reason to rejoice, not to mourn.

1. Why was Jesus’ departure not a source of sorrow but a reason for rejoicing?
2. In verse 6 Jesus calls himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. What is the importance of the three definite articles (*the*) in this verse?
3. What other promises does Jesus give to his disciples about communicating with the Father before they are able to speak to the Father face-to-face? (See verses 12-14.)

4. Some say it is cruel to claim that all who do not believe in Jesus are headed for hell no matter how pious or religious they may be. How do you answer these people?
5. What is the comfort of knowing that a place in heaven exists with your name on it?

The Counselor offers us another Counselor

Jesus now anticipates the great Day of Pentecost, when he would pour out the Holy Spirit on the disciples. The Counselor tells his disciples about another Counselor.

Read John 14:15-17,25-27.

1. Look at verse 17. In what way could Jesus say that the Spirit *already* lived with the disciples and yet *will be* with them?
2. What special work of the Holy Spirit did Jesus have in mind when he tells his first disciples that the Spirit would “remind you of everything that I have said to you” (verse 26)? (Read 2 Peter 1:20,21.)
3. In what way is the peace given by Jesus (and sealed by his Spirit) different from the peace the world gives?
4. When was this promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit first fulfilled in our lives?
5. In what way does God continue to pour out on us his gift of the Spirit?

The Counselor promises that we will produce the fruits of faith

Many of Jesus' parables and illustrations were taken from everyday rural life in Palestine. In John chapter 15, Jesus draws on the familiar scene of the rich grape orchards in the Holy Land.

Read John 15:1-17.

1. Why is it important that there be a solid connection between grapevine and grape branch?

2. Why does a grape branch bear grapes?
3. In what way are we like branches in Jesus, the vine?
4. Why does a Christian bear fruit?
5. In verse 12 Jesus guides our fruit bearing by commanding us, “Love each other as I have loved you.” What are some of the characteristics of the love he is calling us to show one another?
6. Look at verse 8. What is the goal of displaying such Christlike love before the world?

The Counselor assures us of triumph, even in persecution

Like growing saplings, the disciples had been sheltered for three years under the protecting care of their Lord. Direct confrontations with those vigorously opposing the gospel had been rare. Very soon, that would change.

Read John 15:18–16:4.

1. Why did Jesus say the world would hate his disciples?
2. Look at John 15:26,27. What assistance would the Holy Spirit provide the disciples as they underwent persecution?
3. What is the only way we can avoid the world’s rejection? (Look again at verse 19.)
4. While we aren’t called to actively seek persecution, why is it really a badge of honor when it comes to us?
5. Evaluate: Christians really aren’t persecuted today as they were in the days of the disciples.

The Counselor intercedes for his own

Again and again during the ministry of Jesus we see him taking time for prayer. At times he would go off alone to pray for an entire evening. What he prayed at those times we don't know. But in John chapter 17, we gain a unique glimpse of our Lord's prayer life as we hear him pray for his disciples then and now.

Read John 17:1-26.

1. Jesus begins his prayer by praying for himself. Then Jesus turns his attention to his first disciples. What is his request for them? (Pay particular attention to verses 11 and 15.)
2. How would the Father carry out that request? (Look at verse 17.)
3. For whom does Jesus pray beginning in verse 20?
4. What does Jesus pray would happen in his church throughout the ages? (See verses 21-23.)
5. What does Jesus pray for in verse 24?

The next time you are feeling weak and burdened by temptation and the struggle of living a Christian life in a pagan world, remember what your Counselors have done for you! There is a place in heaven with your name on it, and until you get there, you can "call home" and be heard at any time! You have possessed the seal of the Spirit ever since your baptism, and through the means of grace the Spirit continues to be poured out on you generously. Through those same means of grace you are closely bound to your vine so that you may be fruitful branches to your Father's glory. Even when the world frowns on you for your faith in Jesus, the Spirit enables you to be a bold witness to the truth of Christ. And finally, throughout your pilgrimage in life your Savior is constantly interceding for you with your heavenly Father. What a wonderful Counselor your Savior is! How graciously he supplies us with another Counselor in the Holy Spirit!

During the week

Reread John 14–17. Search for other gems of comfort Jesus shares with us that we were not able to cover in this lesson.

Read ahead for next week as we move on to the events in the Garden of Gethsemane. Pay special attention to Christ's struggles in the garden. Look for evidence that he triumphed in those struggles. Read Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-52; Luke 22:39-53; and John 18:1-12a.