

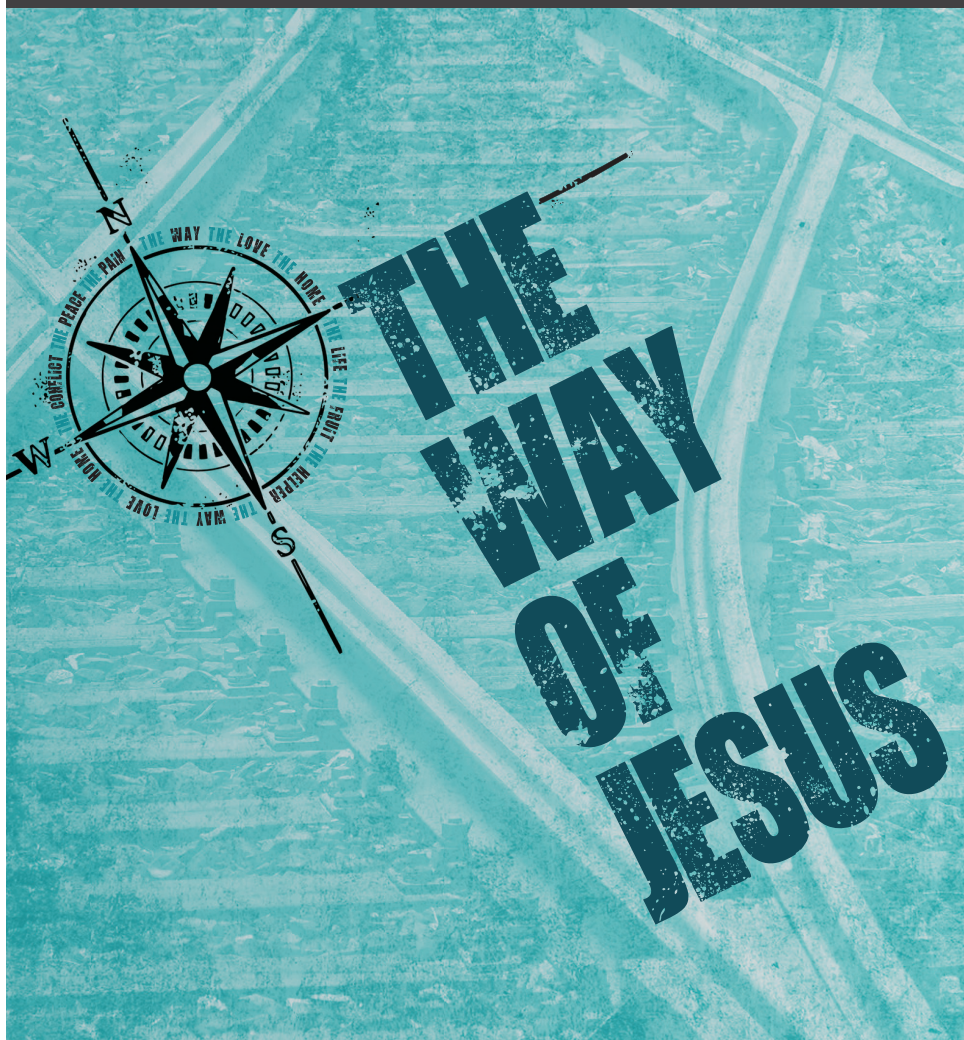
GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

JULY 20 - 24, 2020



# MONDAY

## John 16:25-33

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*“Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.” —Jesus (John 16:25)*

Jesus’ comment to His disciples as He wrapped up His instructions to them (John 13-16) and prepared to pray for them (John 17)—that a time is coming when He will not speak figuratively, but will tell them plainly about His Father—provides a helpful reminder about how God communicates to His people. Throughout Jesus’ ministry He had spoken in parables, although He also often explained them to His disciples. But even with His explanations, they did not always understand His message. From the statement in this passage, it is apparent that this was intentional on Jesus’ part.

The disciples’ confusion was not simply because they were dull or hardheaded. Jesus purposefully used a figurative way to communicate with them. Jesus does not say why He had chosen to do so. Perhaps it was to make them think more deeply about His words. Perhaps it was to protect them from what was about to happen to Him (the less they knew the less likely they were to be implicated by those who killed Jesus). Whatever the reason, Jesus saw fit to use figurative language in His communication with His disciples, but promised a time would come when He would speak plainly to them (presumably after the outpouring of the Spirit).

If Jesus chose to communicate at times figuratively and at times plainly with His closest followers, is there any reason we should expect that He will always communicate clearly with us? Might He not at times choose to let us be puzzled about what He is communicating with us? Perhaps He chooses to do so to make us depend all the more on Him, to motivate us to seek Him through reading His Word and prayer, to cry out to God for clarity and wisdom.

Rather than feeling frustration or questioning our spirituality when we find ourselves struggling to discern God's voice in the midst of life's many challenges, perhaps we should simply ask God to give us patience and discernment as we listen patiently. When we encounter such times in our lives, let us remember Jesus' words to His disciples in this verse and wait for His communication to us to become clear.

## QUESTIONS

When did you last struggle to discern God's voice in your life?

What does listening patiently look like for you?

## PRAYERS FOR JESSIE WEBB AND OPERATION MOBILIZATION

Pray for Jessie Webb, who serves as a social media coach with Operation Mobilization, an organization that exists to mobilize young people to live and share the Gospel of Jesus.

# TUESDAY

## John 16:26-28

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*“In that day you will ask in My name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” —Jesus (John 16:26-28)*

As Jesus anticipated His crucifixion and departure from His disciples, He wanted them to know that they were loved by the Father and had the privilege of asking Him to act in and through them. Throughout Jesus’ ministry He had demonstrated His dependence on the Father. When Jesus commanded the lame man to walk, he was instantly healed (John 5). When Jesus gave thanks for the loaves and fish, they were miraculously multiplied (John 6). When He put mud on the eyes of the blind man and sent him to wash, he was able to see (John 9). When Jesus called forth Lazarus from the tomb, his life was restored (John 11). In this last incident, Jesus specifically prayed to the Father before calling forth Lazarus, acknowledging that His actions were because the Father heard Him (John 11:41-42).

The disciples had witnessed the mighty works that Jesus had done because of His special relationship with the Father. But now that Jesus was leaving them, He reassured them that the Father loved them just as much as He loved them and that the Father would do the things they asked of Him just as He had done the things Jesus asked of Him.

*You are loved!* What powerful words. The Father Himself loves you. He welcomes us to ask of Him so that He can display His glory and grace

through us. Jesus tells His disciples, “*In that day you will ask in my name*” (v. 26). This is not a reference to a prayer formula (“I pray in Jesus’ name”) but an invitation to approach God with the same humility, gratefulness, and boldness that Jesus Himself had demonstrated. Jesus’ mighty works had not been for His own glory but to demonstrate the goodness and glory of the Father. Is that the focus of our prayers—God’s goodness and glory? If so, we can be assured that the Father loves us and will act in and through us to accomplish His purposes. What grace! What kindness! What love!

## QUESTIONS

What difference does it make in your life to know that you are loved by the Father? How does such knowledge change the way you pray? What does praying for God’s glory and goodness mean for the way you pray?

## PRAYERS FOR JESSIE WEBB AND OPERATION MOBILIZATION

Pray for Jessie as she works to support online ministry efforts via social media. Pray for OM’s livestream prayer events, which brings many of OM’s field offices together to unite in prayer.

# WEDNESDAY

## John 16:29-30

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*“Then Jesus’ disciples said, ‘Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.’” (John 16:29-30)*

In response to Jesus’ instructions to His disciples, they made a remarkable profession of faith: *“This makes us believe that you came from God.”* Believing in Jesus is one of the key themes in John’s Gospel. Back in chapter 2 when Jesus turned the water into wine, John observed, *“What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which He revealed His glory; and His disciples believed in Him”* (John 2:11). This is the first affirmation of the disciples’ faith in John’s Gospel, but believing in Jesus is a theme to which He returns frequently.

In summarizing his message, John wrote, *“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name”* (John 20:30-31). The point of the disciples’ affirmation of their belief that Jesus came from God in John 16 is to show a maturing of their faith which leads to greater understanding.

The clear message throughout John’s Gospel is that believing is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing, growing experience for Jesus’ followers. They had believed or began to believe in Jesus when they saw

Him turn water into wine. Now as He instructs them about a future in which He will not be physically present with them, they confess their belief that Jesus came from God. As their understanding of Jesus and the Father has grown, so has their belief in Him. As we know, after Jesus' death and resurrection the disciples all dedicated their lives to following Jesus, accepting death rather than renounce their resolute faith.

Where are we in our experience of faith? Just beginning? Everyone needs to start somewhere. Deepening in trust and commitment to Jesus should be our lifelong pursuit. Stuck in early stages of faith? Consider reading through John's Gospel and highlighting every reference to faith or believing. May Jesus inspire each of us to trust in Him more fully.

## QUESTIONS

How would you describe the maturity of your faith? What things are hard for you to trust God for? What can you do to grow in your experience of trusting Jesus?

## PRAYERS FOR JESSIE WEBB AND OPERATION MOBILIZATION

Pray for OM workers and their ministries around the world that have been impacted by COVID-19.

# THURSDAY

## John 16:31-32

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*“Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.”*  
(John 16:31-32)

Aloneness. We have learned a thing or two about aloneness in recent months. We call it “social distancing,” although some psychologists have suggested our language misses the point. We should rather have referred to it as “physical distancing,” “safe distancing,” or “distant socializing.” Whatever we call it, Jesus and the disciples were about to experience it. After spending most of the previous three years together, Jesus told His disciples that they were about to be scattered to their own homes and leave Him all alone. They would not stand by Him in His hour of deepest distress. Rather, He would experience the physical agony, emotional distress, and spiritual abandonment without the support of His friends.

During the pandemic the profound sense of being alone—being cut off from family and friends—has been one of the greatest challenges of many, particularly family members who live in senior care facilities that have denied access to visitors. Jesus knew that He was about to endure such an experience in His own life.



Yet in the face of this threat, Jesus affirmed His confidence that He would not be alone, for His Father was with Him. His friends may all leave Him, the soldiers may strip Him of His clothes and dignity, He may endure incredible pain and agony, but He would not be alone. In John's Gospel, Jesus' crucifixion ends not with the cry of abandonment found in Matthew's and Mark's Gospels ("*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"), but with the affirmation that His mission was accomplished: "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). The Father gave Him the strength to complete the work He had given to His Son.

When we feel most alone, we would do well to follow Jesus' example by affirming that the Father is with us. When nobody else seems to care, we should remember that our Father cares. When we feel that we have not the strength or courage to continue facing challenges that seem to overwhelm us, we can have confidence that such challenges will not overwhelm our Father. We are not alone, for our Father is with us.

## QUESTIONS

When do you feel most alone? When do you most feel the presence of God in your life? How can you help others who are feeling alone recognize God's presence in their lives?

## PRAYERS FOR JESSIE WEBB AND OPERATION MOBILIZATION

Pray for the Webb's children: Selah, Anders, Renn and Junia, who are still in the middle of transition due to COVID-19. Pray for peace and unity in Jessie's family as they are living with her parents.

# FRIDAY

## John 16:33

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*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*  
—Jesus (John 16:33)

Peace often seems to be very elusive. Recent protests throughout our nation have reminded us that there cannot be peace without justice for all. Jesus recognized that the disciples were about to experience great and grave trouble. As the story of the early Church unfolds in the Book of Acts, we find the disciples (apostles) all flogged (Acts 5), Stephen stoned by an angry mob (Acts 7), and James killed by Herod (Acts 12). Jesus was not naïve about the kind and extent of trouble the disciples would face nor did He want them to be naïve.

But in spite of the looming persecution, Jesus instructed His disciples to take heart because He has overcome the world. Jesus' words helped to put the disciples' troubles in perspective and define what He meant by *peace*. In Jesus' view, peace was not the absence of trouble. It was not measured in terms of prosperity or equality, as much as our American society tends to value such things. Rather, peace was the simple assurance that such troubles are not the final word. Such troubles do not define us and they need not frighten us.

Most of us have not experienced the kind and level of threats faced by Jesus' disciples, although many Christians around the world still do. Such believers often display remarkable courage and resilience because they believe Jesus' statement that He has overcome the world.

Our challenge is not so much resisting fear but rather looking for peace in things other than Jesus. We look for peace in managing our health, in achieving prosperity, in building loving relationships, and in planning for future contingencies. That is, we look for ways to avoid trouble. But the peace Jesus promised is peace in the midst of trouble, based on His overcoming power.

## QUESTIONS

What kind of peace are you pursuing? How will the peace that Jesus promised to His followers help you to be a peacemaker within your sphere of influence? Will you, like the first disciples, face the troubles the world gives you with courage and resilience, remaining committed to Jesus' mission for you? Only as we do this will we experience true peace as Jesus promised.

## PRAYERS FOR JESSIE WEBB AND OPERATION MOBILIZATION

Pray for the world to know the love of God in life-altering, powerful ways.



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