

John #40: Comings and Goings (John 14:15-31)

PRAY

It can sometimes seem like an intimidating, difficult, or even impossible thing to follow Jesus
Taking up our cross daily, counting the cost, facing persecution... None of that is easy
And on even a more fundamental level: the idea of faithfully living as we ought to live,
of doing all that God wants us to do—that can be intimidating enough!
Loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength...
Loving our neighbors... Loving fellow believers... Loving our enemies...
Repenting ruthlessly... Praying persistently... Going and making disciples...
When we consider the high standard Jesus calls us to, it can lead us to despair
We feel weak or inadequate to follow... Helpless to obey all that he commands us
Believe it or not, that's right where God wants us to be... At least at the start
He wants us to be aware of our weakness, so that we depend on him to strengthen us
He wants us to feel our helplessness, so that we depend on him to help us

Please **OPEN** a Bible with me to John 14... John chapter 14 [page #901]
Where we will hear the really encouraging, good news of how God helps us follow Jesus

Today finds us in the middle of Jesus' final meal and talk with his disciples before his death
In recent weeks, we've heard him tell his disciples to not let their hearts be troubled,
But to trust him as the way, the truth, and the life, and to see God the Father through him
However, Jesus was going away—leaving them! How could they do any of this without him?

That leads to our passage today, which describes a lot of comings and goings of God
See, these climactic hours of Jesus' life—and of history—
Would involve a lot of *movement*, if you will, within the Godhead
Tectonic shifts were happening with how God would relate to humankind
But these weren't anything to fear... Jesus' tone here was all encouragement and comfort
He stacks one promise on top of another on top of another, to lift his disciples' spirits
Christ was about to be killed, yet his words were full of so much hope and peace

Jesus had been loving his disciples “to the end” and telling them to love one another,
But now for the first time in all of John, he talks about their love for *him*: **READ v.15¹**
Love for Jesus is displayed through obedience to Jesus
That might sound strange, as obedience has left a sour taste in some of our mouths
We may hear it and think of cold, lifeless religion, rules-keeping, or legalism
But there's a massive difference between dutiful obedience and delighted obedience
One flows out of obligation and might even be forced; the other flows out of love
Almost any good parent is able to see this, that when their kids obey them, it is an
expression of love for them... And disobedience displays the opposite

If you ever wonder: ‘Do I really love Jesus?’ This is the biblical test you can give yourself:
Am I obeying him? Am I hearing what Jesus says, then doing what he says? **READ v.15²**
Now, that's not saying: ‘If you love me, you *must* obey me’, it's ‘you will obey me’

In other words, keeping Jesus' commands is the inevitable result of affection for him

So what are the commandments we're supposed to be keeping? I could give you a list
Or, you can go home and take an hour to read through a gospel,
Taking notes or highlighting every command Christ gives

[tr] If we end up feeling overburdened by that, we're doing something wrong

John says elsewhere: *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."* (1 John 5:3)

On the other hand, if we end up feeling helpless to keep his commands perfectly, that's good
Because that's where the Holy Spirit comes in... Look: **READ v.16-17³**

This is the first major 'movement' of God we see... Jesus was sending the Spirit to them... And:

The Spirit comes to help us love God through obedience (v.15-17, 25-27)

[r] The Holy Spirit comes to help us love God through obedience

The term Jesus uses for "Helper" has been translated in a variety of ways:

Counsellor, advocate, friend, comforter, helper... It refers to a legal assistant or attorney

In its verb form, means 'to call alongside, encourage, or exhort'

Imagine getting arrested and saying: "I want my phone call", and then you call your lawyer,
Who shows up and sits with you, counselling you on what to say and when to stay silent
And if you have to go to court, they stand by you and are tasked with defending you
If your legal advocate doesn't properly defend you, you can even ask for a new trial

They are called and obligated to be by your side, win or lose, no matter what

That's the picture Jesus is drawing by calling the Holy Spirit an advocate or helper

We may not be arrested, but we're troubled, and he knows we're in trouble without him

So before we can even ask for a phone call, he asks his Father to send us an advocate

Someone to come alongside us, stand with us, and help us do what we need to do

In this context, being a helper means helping us love Jesus through obedience to Jesus

His help would be *internal*, in that his work would be physically invisible, done from inside us,

Helping stir our affections for Christ and strengthen our follow through for Christ

Jewish Scriptures placed so much emphasis on certain places God would specially dwell:

At the tabernacle or temple... Bethel or Shiloh or Jerusalem

And the Holy Spirit always existed, and had been *with* God's people

But this was new... God's Spirit was actually going to dwell *inside* people?

It might've rung a bell for the disciples... God had once promised in Ezekiel:

"And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:27)

Now that ancient promise was actually coming to pass! **READ v.17b⁴**

Believer: In the Holy Spirit, God himself dwells in us in order to help us!

And because of his help, we can keep God's words... Obedience is possible

So his help is wonderfully internal... And it's also *eternal*

Jesus was soon leaving, but the Spirit would never leave Jesus' people

Through the Spirit, God would *always* be by their side—and by our side, as our Helper

Notice that Jesus says he'd ask the Father to give "another" Helper

Which implies they already had one... Jesus himself, of course

In 1 John 2:1, John tells us Jesus continues to advocate for us in heaven, before the Father
So, the Spirit is our helper on earth; Jesus is our helper in heaven

Now, there are all kinds of distorted and unbiblical views of the Holy Spirit in our world today
For example, some people can tend to pit the Spirit against truth

As if 'truth' is just cold, heavy, by-the-book, rigid doctrine

And the Spirit is warm, light, tangible, spontaneous experience

But no! The Spirit is so connected and intertwined with the truth of God's word,

That Jesus identifies him as '*the Spirit of truth*' here

Or another example: Ligonier put out their annual "State of Theology" survey this month

In which they polled North American evangelicals on what they believe

Amazingly, they got nearly 100% agreement on there being one true God in three persons

But then they asked whether you agree that the Holy Spirit is a force but not a personal being

And 52% of people agreed: The Spirit is not a person, but instead a divine force to use

Oh no... Since when do we base our theology more on Star Wars than the Scriptures?!

And why would we want a Spirit that could be wielded by whoever knows right ways to use it?

That robs God of his sovereignty and holiness... It also robs us of one of his best features:

His personality—by which he can relate to us, love us, and personally be by our side

I don't want a force I can use; I want a God I can love, and who loves me, and wants to use me

When Jesus mentions in v.17 that 'the world' cannot receive the Spirit, see him, or know him,

He's not referring to the physical planet we're sitting on

He's talking about the moral human order that stands in rebellion against God

I know you know people who aren't looking for God and don't recognize him

It's common sense: Until that changes, they won't be able to receive the Spirit

And if those who are still part of the world have their eyes opened and hearts softened,

so that they do accept the Spirit, then they cease being part of the world!

So don't take this to mean that things are hopeless for you if you don't yet have the Spirit

You have an opportunity to put your faith in Jesus, receive the Spirit, and be changed forever

[tr] The Spirit comes to help us love God through obedience... We'll return to this point

But before that, we'll see Jesus describe another couple moves of God that were going on

So while the Spirit was coming, the Son was going... Yet this wasn't abandonment:

The Son goes away, yet promises to come back to those he loves (v.18-20)

[r] The Son goes away, yet promises to come back to those he loves

He reassures his disciples of this: **READ v.18⁵**

Looking around the table, tears and fears must've been etched on the disciples' faces

Like kids who just got news that their parents were dying, and that they'd be orphaned

But Jesus says: 'I'm not going to leave you like this... I won't be gone forever... I'll come back!'

But when? Was he talking about coming to them through the Spirit's coming?

Or was he talking about returning to them after his resurrection?

Or was he talking about his second coming, which is still to come?

Any are possible, though he's likely referring to the resurrection... Look: **READ v.19-20⁶**

The resurrection was the missing puzzle piece for the disciples

Only after it did they start realizing all that Jesus was doing for them:
Passing on his own resurrection life to them: **READ v.19b⁷**,
And uniting them to himself and to God: **READ v.20⁸**

If you don't yet believe in Jesus as Lord, you need to know you are spiritually dead
But if you come to him, even today, you can be united to him in death and resurrection
Which means when Jesus died, you died, and when Jesus rose, you rose
He dies your deserved death and gives you his life to live

And if you already know Jesus, this means that you already possess resurrection life
Even though you'll die one day, you will live again... Death has lost its sting
And if Jesus has united you to himself, it means that whatever happens to him happens to you
Us being 'in him' doesn't make us equal to him or divine ourselves
But there is a mind-melting correlation between the unity of God and his union with us
That's how deeply and intimately Christ unites us to himself: **READ v.20b⁹**
This has enormous implications for our daily lives, mindsets, and behaviour

Dane Ortlund says it well: *"The might of heaven, the power that flung galaxies into existence, has swept you into himself. And you're there to stay. Amid the storms of your little existence—the sins and sufferings, the failure and faltering, the waywardness and wandering—he is going to walk you right into heaven. He is not just with you. He is in you, and you in him. His destiny now falls on you. His union with you guarantees your eventual glory and rest and calm... Draw strength from your oneness with Jesus. You are no longer alone. No longer isolated. When you sin, don't give up. Let him pick you up and put you on your feet again with fresh dignity. He lifts your chin, looks you in the eye, and defines your existence: "you in me, and I in you"."*

"I will come to you"—He kept that promise for his first disciples
And he makes the same promise to us:

"Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)

The Son has gone away, yet promises to come back to his loved ones... Do you trust him?

[tr] Now, some suppose that Jesus is warm and loving, the Spirit is ethereal yet intimate...
But the Father? He's the distant, cold, angry God that just needs appeased by the other two
Is that true? Heavens no! John 14 gives us a special look into who God is

And what do we see? That all 3 persons are united in love for his people... See:

The Father and Son come to live with those who love God (v.21-24)

[r] The Father and Son both want to live with and come to live with those who love God

We've already seen that love for God means obeying, or keeping, his word
Jesus underscores this point in v.21: **READ v.21a¹⁰**... But then he expands on it: **READ v.21b¹¹**
Now, God's love is contingent on our obedience... Thank the Lord it's not
This is saying that our relationship with the Lord is to be *characterized* by obedience
And from God's end, it is characterized by continual, amazing love
Don't rush over v.21 with its riches... It's well worth soaking in: **READ v.21b¹²**
If you love Jesus, this is true of you! Take comfort... This is a *promise*!
God loves you—Father, Son, and Spirit—with an unbelievable, unbreakable love

There's not one part of the Godhead that's against you... *God* is for you!
And Jesus *will* manifest (or show) himself to you... You will know him deeply
You will experience Jesus for yourself, both now and in the future
One day, you'll even see him with your own eyes... He promises!

READ v.22¹³... 'You just said the world won't see you, but we will... What do you mean?'
This didn't jive with what they expected from Jesus as Messiah
They thought he was to make himself known in startling, irresistible splendour
With crowds, music, parades, armies, and taking down Rome!

Jesus doesn't really answer Judas' question... He reins them back in to what he was saying,
Almost like, 'You're getting distracted... What I'm doing *is* already spectacular!
It's way better than any political or military campaign... Focus in...' **READ v.23-24¹⁴**

Who was the last person to come and make their home with you?

A roommate and friend? A relative? A newborn child? A newlywed spouse?
I think the closest parallel to what Jesus was saying here is a husband or wife
Because it's not like he was merely saying 'I'll come be your roommate'

And it wasn't like he had no choice in the matter, like a baby

He chooses to come and unite his life to ours, for better or worse

And to make his *home* with us... To make our life his permanent dwelling place

When my wife and I vowed to live together and love one another,

it powerfully, drastically changed both of our lives, for good

But when God vows to live together with us and love us? Wow!

We ought to feel graciously loved: Who are we?

When Solomon built a glorious temple, he cried out: "*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!*"¹⁵ ...And how much less this heart of mine?

And yet he does, in reality, come to us to dwell in us

On one level, this happens at our salvation... And on another level, when Christ comes again—

When it's said: "*Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them*"¹⁶

READ v.24b... The Father had sent the Son to deliver *this* promise to his loved ones

Time was running out for Jesus to speak with them... Thankfully, they would still have a teacher:

READ v.25-26¹⁷... This reiterates our earlier, first point, that:

The Spirit comes to help us love God through obedience [put back up]

Jesus has made his point about loving obedience multiple ways throughout this passage

Now he reassures them, again, that they won't be left on their own

The Father would send the Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name—as his emissary,

In order to keep teaching them... And to keep reminding them of all Jesus said

He very much did this for the apostles who wrote down the words of Christ in Scripture

But I believe he also does something similar for us every time we open our Bibles

Praise the Lord: You can now read God's Word and understand it, deep in your heart!

And the Spirit, our spiritual teacher, doesn't let us forget the life-giving words of Christ

So, for example, when you feel anxious about life's troubles,

The Spirit may help you remember Jesus' words: "*Look at the birds of the air... your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*"¹⁸
Or when you're feeling angry and want to lash out at someone who's hurt you,
You may be led to pray: "*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.*"
Or when you're overwhelmed by guilt and shame over something you've done,
You recall: "*Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.*"¹⁹
We ought to pray for more and more of this activity of the Spirit in us—the more the better!

Notice, though: the Holy Spirit comes not to make a show of himself, but to point us to Christ
That's one way you can discern whether or not someone is truly operating in the Spirit:
Are they making much of themselves? Or only highlighting the Spirit's power?
Or are they making much of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God through him?
And another way: If it's causing chaos, disorder, disunity, or fear, it's not the Spirit of God

See, the Spirit of truth is also a Spirit of love, joy and peace... *Shalom*

Listen to these precious words from Jesus: **READ v.27**²⁰

Shalom was used as both a greeting and a farewell... Here, it's a farewell: **READ v.27a**²¹
Him giving a gift as he leaves is like a bequest—like bequeathing peace to them in his will
We aren't told whether, here, he's referring to spiritual peace with God—a peace treaty,
Or to the robust Hebrew concept of *shalom*—wholeness, completeness, harmony,
Or to a peace of mind and dissolving of fear... He does immediately say: **READ v.27c**²²
Maybe he's referring to it all... He gave them all of the above, after all

But one of his points is: The world can try to give us peace, but it ultimately fails to do so
You won't find true peace in a big house, nor in a happy household
You won't find peace in your salary, your bottom line, or your insurance policies
You won't find peace in any human ruler, no matter how good they might sound
There is just too much hatred, selfishness, bitterness, anxiety and fear... Peace is suffocated
The world can't give you what Jesus offers... His peace is different
He displays transcendent peace, his own peace, throughout his suffering and death
And by his death, he absorbed the sins of others and the evil of the world²³
Making peace by the blood of his cross... Peace with God, and the peace of God
Friends, if you have this Saviour, you are named in his will to receive his peace: **READ v.27**²⁴
When you trust in him, you will be given composure and courage in the face of trouble

[tr] After all, that's what *he* demonstrated to them in the agonizing hours that followed
As we conclude, Jesus sticks to the topic of his departure, but with a distinct point:

The Son goes away to display his obedient love (v.28-31)

Jesus doesn't just demand *our* obedient love... He sets the example of this for us
[r] The Son goes away to display, or prove, his own obedient love

Notice again the theme of movement: The Spirit comes, the Son goes, the Father and Son come, the Spirit comes, and now once more, the Son goes:

READ v.28-29²⁵... They evidently didn't totally love Jesus yet, for his own sake

Because if they had, they would have been so excited *for him*... He was going home!

He was returning to the glorious realm where he belonged, at the Father's side

So their grief revealed not a love for Jesus but a self-centered sense of loss
Yet he was preparing them now, so when it all went down, they could have true faith and love

Now, there's one line in v.28 that's confusing: **READ v.28b**²⁶

How is the Father greater than the Son? Aren't the Father and Son equal?

Hasn't that been one of Jesus' points all along? Why yes, it has!

So don't take this as if Jesus were going, "You know what: never mind all the claims I've been making... I've got new revelation! I'm inferior to God the Father."

If I were to tell you: quarterback Josh Allen, singer Taylor Swift, and the King of England
are all greater than I,

no one would assume I mean they are more of a human or even a better human than I am

They may have greater athleticism, talent, wealth, or majesty than me

But the context of what I'm saying determines what I mean by greatness

Similarly, Jesus wasn't saying he was less God or a lesser God than the Father

He was talking about returning home to the undiminished glory of the Father

There, the Father was clearly greater than the Son was *in his incarnate state*

Having obediently emptied himself was a temporary situation for Jesus

So the Father was greater, but he was going back!

Before then, however, was the cross

Which was the most stunning example of obedient love: **READ v.30-31a**²⁷

He was running out of time to say much more to them, as the devil was on the way

Satan indwelt Judas in the last chapter, and was mustering up a mob to come for Jesus

However, if Jesus didn't want to go, the devil couldn't make him: **READ v.30b**²⁸

That's a legal claim: 'He's got nothing on me!'

No charges could stick against Jesus... He had no weak or defective points...

He'd been perfectly obedient to God's law and his Father's will all his life

No, the devil was coming, but he wasn't in control... The ruler of this world didn't rule Jesus

So why'd Jesus go then? Love and obedience: **READ v.31a**²⁹... Can you hear his resolve?

'The devil can't force me to die... But I *will* do what the Father requires of me.'

And therefore, he willingly and intentionally *goes* to meet the devil head on: **READ v.31b**³⁰

Jesus heads for the cross, where he'd allow the serpent to strike at, or bruise, his heel

And why? Because he loved us, yes, absolutely...

But here, Jesus emphasizes that he did it because he loved *his Father*

And thus, the love between Father and Son overflows into love for his people

Really, the basis for any love existing at all, ever, is the love that exists within our triune God

Michael Reeves explains: *"Just as the Father decided to include us in his love for the Son, to share it with us, so the Son chose to include us in his love for the Father. He delights to echo his Father's love back to him, and that is what it is to image God, to be his child. We have been created that, knowing his love, we might love the Lord our God... The mission comes from the overflow of love, from the uncontainable enjoyment of the fellowship. So it is with the Father and the Son; so it is with us. The Spirit catches us up to share their pleasure, and it is that delight in them that fuels us to want to make them known... We become like what we worship."*

Jesus said: "...so that the world may know..."

Turns out Jesus would still show himself to the world as well
Though not in his resurrection so much as in his death... He'd put divine love on display

CONCLUSION

We might sum up this whole passage as Jesus saying:

“I do as commanded, so the world sees love...

Now you do as commanded, so the world sees love”

In his final words in the chapter, he invites his disciples to get up and go with him

He invites them into the movement he is making... It's their turn to *come* and *go*

But no matter how foreboding the future may be, they (and we) go forth prepared by him

We are given an arsenal of promises of God to lean on: ‘I will... He will... We will’

We are given the peace of Christ to guard our hearts and minds

And we are given God himself, in the Holy Spirit, to dwell in us as our Helper

So even as Jesus rises to go meet the devil and death, **READ v.27b**³¹

God is with us, and he'll be back

PRAY

Benediction: prayer, 5min,

¹ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

² “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

³ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 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.

⁴ You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

⁵ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

⁶ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

⁷ Because I live, you also will live

⁸ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

⁹ you in me, and I in you.

¹⁰ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

¹¹ And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

¹² he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

¹³ Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?”

¹⁴ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

¹⁵ 1 Kings 8:27

¹⁶ Revelation 21:3

¹⁷ These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

¹⁸ Matthew 6:26

¹⁹ John 8:11

²⁰ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

²¹ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

²² Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

²³ HT Carson

²⁴ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

²⁵ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.

²⁶ the Father is greater than I

²⁷ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

²⁸ He has no claim on me

²⁹ I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

³⁰ Rise, let us go from here.

³¹ Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.