

## What About the Cause?

John 14:12-14

Jesus made three very distressing announcements after supper. The first was that one of them would betray Him. The second was that He was to go away and that they would not be able to come with Him now. The third was that Peter who swore that he was willing to die with or for Jesus would deny Him before the sunrise. These announcements were connected and together they threatened to turn the world of the disciples upside down and inside out. Jesus was their rock. He was their Rabbi. When they left everything to follow Him they were counting on Him to be there for them. Now, He was saying that He would be betrayed, that not even Peter would be up for what He was facing and that He was going to a place where they could not come. Jesus had a room full of very alarmed and distressed young men. He needed to give them the tools they would need to cope with the changes that were coming their way. The disciples reacted naturally to the news that Jesus gave them as He knew they would. They felt abandoned. They felt hopeless. They felt betrayed.

Jesus addressed these feelings one by one. To answer the sense of abandonment He spoke of the reason why He was leaving as it pertained to their personal circumstance. "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." So Jesus was looking beyond the moment, beyond what the disciples could see or anticipate and making plans for a reunion that would follow a necessary separation. The disciples could not then understand this. They could not imagine why a separation was needed. But Jesus knew what they did not know, and they knew this was true. If Jesus told them that separation was necessary and would lead to a reunion, they could accept this. They trusted Him and they knew that His words were infallible. He was never wrong. A temporary separation for the sake of a permanent reunion is not abandonment. Jesus still loved them.

But Jesus' departure also left them feeling hopeless. This was rooted in their dependence upon Jesus for the anything and the everything of their lives. If He were no longer there, what would they do? How could they cope? Jesus' answer was that they already had all they needed to move forward in their lives. Jesus had provided the way to God. So, now that they had their own relationship with God (The Father), they could receive from Him all they would need. The disciples apparently did not have a consciousness that they knew God in this way and so Jesus explained that by knowing Him in this way, they knew that Father in the same way. Jesus' argument was based upon the union of Himself with the Father. Everything Jesus said and did represented the Father as much as Himself. Think of a married couple who has a couple of credit cards. Let's say the husband has a Master card and the wife has a Discover card. Each take their cards and go shopping. Because they are married, when the wife signs for a purchase, the husband is just as responsible for that purchase as she is and the opposite is also true. In a sense we could say that the husband is also there when his wife makes the purchase, promising alongside of her that he will pay while she is signing the ticket and promising that she will pay. So everything that Jesus said, the Father also said. Every promise that Jesus made, the Father also made that promise too. Every expression of compassion that Jesus spoke came from the Father's heart as much as it came from the heart of Jesus. The disciples had nothing to worry about, even as Jesus spoke of leaving them in a way that they did not understand, because the Father, the unseen guarantor of all that Jesus promised, was still with them.

We are suggesting that the disciples also felt betrayed. By whom? By Jesus Himself. Beyond the personal connection that each of the disciples felt with Jesus was their belief in and commitment to the cause that they felt He represented. They did not leave everything and follow Him just to be with Him as a person whom they admired or even loved, they left everything and followed Him in order to support or join the cause or the movement He was leading. Jesus was the leader of His movement. He was the one who knew where He was going. The disciples were followers. If He were to leave them, the ship would then be

rudderless. They had trusted Him to see it through to the end. If Jesus left them, what would happen to the cause?

Jesus answered this concern in verses 12-14. His "most assuredly" expresses His own deep concern over the future of the cause. From where they were, leaving would seem like a reversal of priorities but the cross would answer the question of commitment in less than 24 hours. Jesus had a clarity that was not possible for the disciples at this very instant and yet He still spoke to the root of their very deep emotional reaction. "he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also..." Their belief in the cause tied them to Himself. They had witnessed Jesus' work for the cause and had never doubted His commitment. They came to the point of joining Him so that His cause became their own. They had already experienced the transition from witness to participant. Jesus' work was their work. Jesus had not announced an end to the cause. As strange as it seemed at the time, Jesus did not see His leaving as detrimental to the cause but as that which supported it. He still held the cause or the movement as His central purpose. He was as active in the cause by leaving as He had been by being present with the disciples. Their belief in Him would continue to direct their lives. They would continue to do the very works that they had been doing as Jesus was present with them.

Then Jesus said the thing that really gets our attention, "And greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." Bruner points out that there are works Jesus did that no one else can do... "Reconcile the world to God, satisfy God's justice, reveal God classically, exorcise the devil definitively, die carrying away the sin of the world, and rise defeating death forever..." But Jesus was not talking about those things. Instead, we ask, how would we know about all that Jesus did if it were not for the gospels that tell His story. And, how would you know if someone, your neighbor or friend or parent did not tell you of all that Jesus has done? The ongoing viability of the ministry of Jesus depends on you.

And then in respect to the ministry, Jesus said, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." So we begin with the work of Christ which

comes into our lives and changes them to the glory of the Father. Coming to believe in Him we become convinced of the veracity of the gospel and the worthiness of every work of Christ both in His day and ours. Our hope then is to join Him in His work, to share with other what we have come to know ourselves. As such we do what we can do but what he cannot since we are here and He in a sense is there. To accomplish this feat, we find that we need His help and He has said that we should ask. Ask in His name that the Father may be glorified. With this motivation, go ahead and ask anything in His name and He has promised that He will do it.