

JOHN 14-17

JESUS' DEPARTURE AND HIS PROMISE

Jesus will go away to the place where his father is, but this should be received as good news by his followers.

- Jesus' going away is in order to prepare a place for his followers in the afterlife.
- Jesus' going away makes room for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within believers. The Holy Spirit is also the spirit of Jesus. It will confirm within believers that they belong to God and that the world cannot overcome them. It will lead them into truth and it will remind them of all that Jesus taught them. It will also fill them with confidence when they face opposition and persecution.

ABIDE IN ME

Jesus abides in the father and the father abides in Jesus. So too believers are called to abide in Jesus as he abides in them. The Father and the Son have included believers in the circle of love that they share.

The words 'abide' 'believe' and 'love' are all interrelated. Jesus and the father abide in one another because they are love. So too believers abide in Jesus and Jesus abides in them because they are bound by love. Finally, believers are commanded to love one another as Jesus has loved them.

The marks of love among believers ought to be servanthood and friendship. A true friend is ready to serve and also to lay down his/her life for the other. The essence of Jesus' self-revelation is self-giving love.

To believe in Jesus is to believe in God, and to know God the father one must see God's true nature in Jesus. Faith breeds the spirit of love, recognition of God in Jesus and acceptance of Jesus as God's Word made flesh.

THE LOVE COMMANDMENT

Jesus was sent into the world because God so loved the world. Therefore, Jesus whole mission and ministry is about self-giving love in the form of forgiveness, servanthood, friendship and sacrifice. Love also breeds unity among believers. 'You must be one as I and the Father are one.' Unity does not mean uniformity but a spirit of co-operation, trust and care. It is also about fellowship and friendship among believers because they share a common identity as those who belong to Jesus.

As Jesus will lay down his life for them, so too believers will lay down their lives for him and for one another.

But even as believers must live in and out of love, they will encounter the same opposition that Jesus has been encountering. The very love to which believers will witness to by their fellowship and friendship together in community will be a basis of judgement on the world (because there is little fellowship and friendship in the world) and hate from the world (because they stand on such different values and priorities). Judgement is also based on the fact that the world has chosen against Jesus and his love and, therefore, against the way of life that is truly eternal. God's love revealed and embodied in Jesus is the truth about the world and about humanity in the world. To live against it is to deny the truth and reject it. Sin is to reject such love which is the same to rejecting Jesus and refusing to believe in him. Judgement falls accordingly.

I AM

In these chapters we have a few more 'I am' sayings of Jesus. Jesus is the way the truth and the life. Jesus is also the vine. In the first, Jesus is the means to God, a theme that has already come through loud and clear throughout the gospel. One cannot believe in God without believing in Jesus as the way to God. In the second, Jesus is the ground upon which believers stand. The branches cannot exist and grow if they are not rooted and nurtured by the vine itself. The fruit that the branches bear is love, the same love Jesus has for them and the same love he and the Father share.

LOVE

In these chapters, Jesus declares most clearly the values of his kingdom: it's all about love. But the emphasis in this gospel is love as friendship. True friendship requires the elimination of all status and inequality so that people can serve one another and be present and intimate in their care for one another. True friendship cannot exist when status, competition and inequality exist. Jesus leads the way with his disciples (foot-washing servanthood) and reveals that even though the father is greater than him, they are totally one in love. So his followers are called to be with one another, as branches rooted in the vine who is Christ.

