

Introduction:

A. *Illus.*: Ric Olson shared this story with me:

Participation in numerous musical events through the years has been a source of real delight and inspiration for me; however, I do know that there are most likely many more musical opportunities that are now behind me rather than in front in me. Recently, I got to thinking about the last time my dear friend Ruth sang in public.

Ruth was in her nineties living at a skilled nursing facility (community). The facility (community) happened to be having their annual talent show. The Life Enrichment Team had encouraged Ruth to enter the talent show - despite Ruth's reluctance. I remember her second guessing whether she should have signed up or not - but then her time on the program was announced.

This very small, frail gingerly lady went to the piano and slowly and softly sang and played the song: "I Love You Lord." IT WAS WONDERFUL!!!

After the talent show, Ruth and I shared a piano bench. I would play a song and we would sing it together - then it was her turn to pick a song for us to sing. "Could we sing I Love You Lord?" So we sang "I Love You Lord" together. Then we'd sing another song and then it was her turn again. "Have we sung I Love You Lord?" So we sang it again. This went on and on and on as Ruth repeatedly requested that we sing together "I Love You Lord."

I remember the last time I saw Ruth - walking past Ruth's room - looking in too just say hi - and seeing this very precious, small, frail wonderful woman curled up in her bed - sound asleep - probably singing "I Love You Lord" as she slept. Because of her acceptance of the message of Easter, soon she was home with Jesus. I'm nearly certain what her first words might have been when she first met our Lord face to face.

B. I want to be like Ruth. If my memory fades I want the last thing I can remember to be that I love the Lord and when I

step into heaven I want those to be the words on my lips. As I looked for passages of Scripture that would help us understand better what it means to love the Lord I thought of what Jesus said to his disciples in **John 14:15**, "*If you love me, keep my commands.*" If that's all you hear from Jesus it sounds kind of cold. Try putting that on one of those little candy valentines. In order to understand that statement properly we need to look at the context. Turn to **John 14**.

- C. It was the last night of Jesus' life, after he and his disciples had eaten their last supper together. For the disciples, things were becoming very dark. They knew Jesus' life was threatened and he'd told them plainly he would be crucified. His words had been as dark as the night, like a funeral shroud, like the end of hope itself: "*One of you is going to betray me, "where I'm going you cannot come," "Peter, before the rooster crows you will disown me three times.*" You can be sure the mood in that room was as dark as the night outside.

Then, of all things, Jesus says, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*" What?? How could they *not* be troubled?! "*You believe in God,*" Jesus went on, "*Believe also in me.*" What follows is Jesus' astonishing explanation of why, even under these worst of all conditions, even when the disciples themselves would fail, their hearts did not need to be troubled. And part of that explanation included Jesus' words, "*If you love me, keep my commands.*"

- D. There was no question that the disciples loved Jesus. In his last hour with them he did not need to stir up their love. The problem was that, since they loved him so much, what would happen to them when he was gone? In fact, if even while he was still with them, one of them would betray and

another deny him, what hope was there for any of them?
Today, let me share with you from John 14 how our love for Jesus can grow even though he is no longer among us. [Read 14:2-6...]

I. DESPITE DYING, JESUS HAS GONE TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR US TO BE WITH HIM FOREVER (14:2-6)

I'll just take a moment on this point because my focus is later in this passage.

- A. *Illus.*: Remember that story of a newspaper printing Mark Twain's obituary when he hadn't died? The news came to him when he was on a trip in London. He wrote back, "*I have even heard on good authority that I was dead.... The report of my death was an exaggeration.*" In a way, news of Jesus' death was an exaggeration, too. It's as if Jesus is saying, "*Don't let my impending death worry you, no matter how terrible it is. The reason I won't be with you is **not** that I'll be dead but that I've gone to heaven to prepare the place where we'll spend eternity together.*"
- B. What a burden was lifted! Oh, the separation from Jesus would still be hard but to know that he wasn't dead at all—to know that he was actually in heaven thinking about them and preparing a place for them—well, that changed everything. *Illus.*: I always think about Joe & Angie, a seminary couple who were here in my first couple years. They were engaged to be married on the Labor Day weekend but before that, Joe had to spend the whole summer isolated in the Canadian north woods planting trees. When I said, "*I bet this will really be hard for you,*" Joe replied, "*I love anticipating big events. I am already imagining how wonderful it will be when we get back together!*"

C. Don't let your hearts be troubled! Jesus is preparing the place we will share with him forever.

Let's read on for another reason to be untroubled: **vv.7-14**... One of the distressing things about Jesus' departure would be that his amazing works would end, works that only God can do. But, in effect, Jesus says, *Oh, don't worry about that. If you think what you've **seen me do** is wonderful, wait till you see what **you** will do!*

II. IF WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD WE WILL DO EVEN GREATER WORKS THAN JESUS HIMSELF DID

- A. In short, in the first verses Jesus is grounding his disciples in the astonishing reality that God the Father is *in* Jesus and Jesus is *in* the Father. No one had ever talked about God like that before. And the disciples were gradually coming to grasp what this meant and to believe it. Their faith that Jesus was the Son of God, and that the Father was in him, was transforming them. In fact, believing that is how someone is *born again*, and how God himself comes to live in *us* as he did in Jesus.
- B. That leads to that amazing statement in **v.12**, “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” That warrants a double take. How is that even possible?? I mean, only days before Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Greater than that?! Our problem in reading this is that we think the greatest thing anyone could ever do is raise someone from the dead, but it isn't.

Remember what the Son of God came to earth to do. **Jn 3:16**, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, **that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**” **Jn. 12:46**, “I have come into the world

as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” The work of Jesus was to offer eternal life, which he purchased with his blood, to whoever would believe in him. Everything Jesus said and did was focused on that purpose. The word *believe* appears about **85 times** in John. The point of Jesus’ every sermon, conversation, and miracle was **that people might believe in him and receive everlasting life.**

C. We, his disciples, will do even greater works than Jesus did for several reasons:

1. Most important, after Jesus died for sin, rose from the dead, ascended to God’s right hand, and sent the Holy Spirit salvation was complete and life-changing.
2. Jesus’ next statement in vv.13-14 promises us that we can ask whatever we need so that the Father can be glorified in the Son; that is, so that people can come to know and worship God the Father through Jesus the Savior and Lord. We must have the Scripture-induced imagination, the chutzpah, and the love to *ask*. The issue here isn’t really *believing* but *asking*. We ask because we believe Jesus’ promise here. This is why it is so important that we meet together on the first Sunday of each month for *First, Prayer*, why it is important that your Growth Groups pray behind your personal concerns for Christ to open hearts to the gospels. It’s why it is important that we think about what is standing in the way of faith for people we know, and to pray that Jesus would open the doors.
3. The next statement, in v.15, is that those who love Jesus obey him, and thus become little christs in this world. Let’s focus on this for a moment.

a) This key statement, “*If you love me, keep my commands,*” is a conditional sentence. *If... then...* It sounds like a test, or like the issue of their love is in question. But we *know* they loved Jesus. So the sense is more, “*Those who love me will inevitably keep my commands.*” Love for Jesus always shows in obedience to him.

b) When Jesus said, “*If you love me, keep my commands,*” what commands did he mean. Is there a list somewhere? Jesus’ commands are things like become like little children, be servants of others, don’t be hypocrites, trust in Christ, be generous to the poor and love righteousness, go and preach the gospel. The command he just said was to *ask him for anything* in order to accomplish his work in the world. In other words, *pray!* **And above all else, love one another.** Jesus says that again and again. In fact in the next chapter, **Jn 15:17**, Jesus puts it as plain as it can be: “*This is my command: Love each other.*” How are you doing at that.

c) Keeping Jesus’ commands is the same as loving him because obedience gets us in synch with Jesus’ heart. Obedience isn’t some test Jesus contrives. It is how we hold his hand, how we share his heart.

Obeying Jesus is how we become like Jesus.

4. And the next statement in **vv.16-17** is that God will send the Holy Spirit, the *Advocate* to “*help you and be with you forever.*” Help you with what? Loving and obeying Christ in this dark world. He’ll be on your side. He’ll tell you God’s truth. He will never leave you. And when the Holy Spirit, our God-given, indwelling

Advocate, is with us it is the same as having Jesus himself with us.

5. Another reason is tied to Jesus resurrection in v.19, “Because I live, you also will live.” In other words, we will be among the immortals. Despite living in these fragile tent-bodies, these jars of clay, the resurrection power of Jesus will enable us, even in our greatest weakness to display the power of God all the more convincingly.

And that’s how it is that Jesus can say, *“whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.”*

Innumerably more people have come to believe in Jesus through Jesus’ disciples than when Jesus preached himself. On the Day of Pentecost alone, just 50 days after Jesus’ death, 3000 people believed. And that was just the beginning. *Illus.:* Our friend, **Marilyn Adamson**, with Cru launched the evangelistic website, EveryStudent.com for Cru when the internet was still young. It has spread all over the world in 42 languages reaching people of all ages, many in countries where Christians cannot freely share their faith. She reports that just last year 24.2 million people came to the site with **343,300** people reporting that they had become new believers (about 940/day)!

Those are also how a few verses later, speaking to these same distraught disciples, he could say in v.27, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

Conclusion

There's no need for our hearts to be troubled because for those who believe in Jesus it is as if he never left! Jesus draws us up into his great work in this world by his Holy Spirit, by inviting us to pray for whatever we need to advance that work, and by giving us commands to synch our hearts to his.

That's why, as the years pass, those who trust Christ learn to love him more, not less. We older believers have our songs: "*Sweeter as the Years Go By*," and "*The Longer I Serve Him, the Sweeter He Grows*." It's why Ruth, when almost everything else had slipped from her memory, still sang, "*I Love You, Lord*."