

**Introduction:**

- A. *Illus.*: Twenty years ago there was a national bestselling novel entitled, *Joshua*, by Joseph Girzone. An enigmatic man named Joshua moved into a small cabin on the edge of a town. The book blurb explains: “A quiet and simple man, Joshua appears to seek nothing for himself. He supports himself by working as a carpenter. He charges very little for his services, yet his craftsmanship is exquisite. The statue of Moses that he carves for the local synagogue prompts amazement as well as consternation.” A desperately sick child is mysteriously healed after he visits. Then the local church leaders confront him. He even gets sent to Rome to answer to the Pope. You get the idea. The book was subtitled, *A Parable for Today*.
- B. The point seemed to be that we all should be as gentle and spiritual as Jesus, regardless of the religion we follow. It took me awhile but later I figured out what was missing. That *Yeshua* didn't die for anyone's sins nor rise from the dead. The author suggested that, like Jesus, we can change our community by simple goodness and openhearted spirituality. I'll tell you something: **I can be better than I am by trying, but to be Christlike takes more than trying.** Jesus' moral influence is profound but it is not what has turned the world upside down. Turn to **John 14**.
- C. That begs the question: If Jesus had such a powerful influence upon people when he lived among us why in the world didn't he continue to live among us after his death and resurrection? If “God loved the world so much,” why *wouldn't* the Messiah, alive with immortality and power, continue to live among us? Just imagine how the world might be different if he had! That was the very question that one of Jesus' disciples asked in **John 14:22**, “*Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, 'But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?'*”
- D. To catch you up, these are the words of Jesus right after the Last Supper, the night before he was crucified. He told his disciples that he was going away and that they couldn't go

with him. Yet, despite this most unsettling announcement, he told them in **Jn 14:1**, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.*” I’m not going to re-teach vv.1-21 but let me just highlight for you some key verses so we have the context in mind as we come to Judas’s question. Jesus said...

- ***I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***
  - ***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.***
  - ***And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.***
  - ***If you love me, keep my commands.***
  - ***I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.***
  - ***I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.***
- E. And that’s when Judas asks, “*But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?*” His point being, **what good would that do?** How will anyone believe in you if they can’t see you? How will God establish his kingdom on earth if the Messiah is incognito to all but his followers? This doesn’t make any sense!

Here’s the strange thing: it seems like Jesus ignores the question. What Jesus says doesn’t seem to answer Judas’s question. But, of course, Judas’s question wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t important and Jesus’ reply must be the answer to the question. **Why doesn’t the risen Christ show himself to the world? Because he can do greater works through us, thanks to the Holy Spirit.** In answering Judas’s question, he tells us how. Through *us*?! Even if we were like that Joshua, always good and gentle, that’s no substitute for Jesus being among us in his immoral glory!

I. WE EMBODY THE RISEN CHRIST THROUGH OUR LOVING OBEDIENCE (14:23-24)

- A. Here is the process: God draws us to trust Jesus Christ to save us. Our faith flowers into love for our Savior and Lord. Our love naturally expresses itself in obeying him. God enables us to grow as righteous people because we love Jesus Christ. *Illus.*: Recently I've prayed with almost 200 people in this church. One thing that stood out to me is that you *want* to serve Jesus. You *want* to grown in your faith. You are glad when someone prays for you to become more Christlike and to know more fully your high privileges in Christ. Our love for Christ orients toward obedience to Christ. We want what he wants for us.
- B. What is Jesus talking about when he says, "*Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching*"? What is unique about Jesus' teaching is that it all revolves around the gospel—the good news that Jesus died for our sins and rose again to give us new life, all for the glory of God. It isn't just rules of morality. **So the first command we obeyed was to repent and believe the good news.** Then that leads us to obey, "*The greatest among you is the servant.*" "*If anyone would come after me they must take up their cross.*" *Love one another.*" "*Love your enemies.*" "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel.*" "*Be filled with the Spirit.*" "*Set your heart on things above.*"

One thing I've learned as a preacher of Scripture: **often obeying Christ isn't a matter of *doing* so much as it is of *thinking differently*.** "*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" When Paul wanted to command Christians to serve and honor one another he said, "*Let this **mind** be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*"

- C. Believers who obey Jesus' teaching gradually become more and more like Jesus. Obeying Jesus makes us *like* Jesus, not just morally but in heart and mind. When we love and obey Jesus we love others better. To put it another way, we become **grace-givers**. Through Jesus we love people in

ways they don't deserve and could never earn. **We become agents of grace giving people a taste for Jesus.**

*Illus.:* I came across an op-ed piece written for the *New York Times* about a month ago by Nicholas Kristof entitled, "A Little Respect for Dr. Foster." Kristof makes clear he is most certainly not an evangelical yet he says, "*But I've been truly awed by those I've seen in so many remote places, combating illiteracy and warlords, famine and disease, humbly struggling to do the Lord's work as they see it...*" He focuses on "Dr. Stephen Foster, 65, a white-haired missionary surgeon who has lived in Angola for 37 years—much of that in a period when the Angolan regime was Marxist and hostile to Christians."

"*We were granted visas,*" [Foster] said, "*by the very people who would tell us publicly, 'your churches are going to disappear in 20 years,' but privately, 'you are the only ones we know willing to serve in the midst of the fire.'*"

Kristof writes, "*One son contracted polio; a daughter survived cerebral malaria; and the family nearly starved when the area was besieged during war and Dr. Foster insisted on sharing the family rations with 100 famished villagers.*"

Kristof ends his piece this way: "*The next time you hear someone at a cocktail party mock evangelicals, think of Dr. Foster and those like him. These are folks who don't so much proclaim the gospel as live it. They deserve better.*" [Sunday Review, 3/28/15]

I suspect there is more proclaiming that Kristof realizes. Dr. Foster's website carries the banner: *Hope for Angola Through healthcare, agriculture, education and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through loving obedience those believers embody Christ's love.*

Jesus continues to answer Judas's question in **vv.25-26....**

## **II. WE EMBODY THE RISEN CHRIST THROUGH OUR GRASP OF GOSPEL TRUTH (14:25-26)**

- A. There is nothing about Jesus' teaching that you or I would ever figure out on our own, let alone *do*. It is *all* counter-intuitive. It all cuts against the grain of our pride and self-sufficiency. Just this chapter alone is an intricate tapestry of truth like nothing you would ever read or hear anywhere else. It is the same with Romans or Hebrews, Philipians or Philemon, Matthew or Revelation. **We could never embody Jesus in this world unless we are reshaped in mind and soul by Jesus' teaching.** We certainly can't *obey* him if we don't know what his teaching is.
- B. These verses tell us why we have the New Testament. The Holy Spirit directly guided the writers to remember all that Jesus said in careful detail *and* to work out the central meaning of Jesus' teaching and deeds—especially his death, resurrection and ascension—for every believer who would follow. What's more they enable us to see all God did and said in the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. That is why we are People of the Book.
- C. Not only has the Holy Spirit ensured that we believers have this complete and unerring explanation of all that the gospel means, but we also experience the Spirit's *illumination* of Scripture in our lives now. *Illus.:* A poet can look at nature and see a metaphor for life. An engineer can look at a problem and see its pieces and pathways. A mother can hear a kid's story and discern what's really going on. A Christian, shaped by Scripture, can look at life and see how the gospel of Jesus overlays it; can see the topography of God's Kingdom overlaying this world.
- D. So back to Judas's question: why wouldn't Jesus show himself to the world after his resurrection? Because he has given us his very mind and truth through the Scripture, illumined for us by the Holy Spirit. That gospel-saturated thinking comes out in the work and lives of Christian artists, scientists and ethicists, those in business, education and politics. The reason Jesus was content to leave us in his place is that the Holy Spirit teaches us all that the gospel means so that we can be the ambassadors of Christ, trustworthy to bring gospel truth into all of life.

Then Jesus gave his disciples a kind of benediction in **v.27...** That's how he began this teaching back in **v.1...** And how he will end it in **16:33**, *"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."*

### **III. WE EMBODY THE RISEN CHRIST THROUGH OUR CHRISTLIKE PEACE (14:27)**

- A. How did Jesus leave us his peace? First, by saving us from our sin and reconciling us to God. Everything else follows from that. *"It is well with my soul!"*

Then there are these gifts that he's just described. There is peace in **loving obedience** to Jesus because we are becoming what we were created to be and we are not resisting the Lord. There is peace in the presence of the **Holy Spirit within us**—the very Spirit of God's peace. There is peace to be found in **knowing God's Word** through Christ. It's as if we read Scripture's promises and principles and the Holy Spirit inside us and among us is going, *"Amen. That's right!"* As we work through the turbulence of day-to-day life we learn to lay hold of God's peace—through Scripture, repentance, fellowship with others, prayer, worship, obedience, and hope.

- B. Jesus distinguishes the peace he gives from any other kind of peace: *"I do not give to you as the world gives."* Remember the slogan, *"Give peace a chance."* Not even those who fervently desire peace can lay hold of it, not even for their own hearts. No guru of meditation or self-actualization, no negotiator or peace-protester, no nature-lover or palace-dweller knows peace like the humblest believer in Jesus.
- C. *"Do not let your hearts be troubled..."* We have to manage our troubled and frightened hearts, just as those disciples learned to do. Not by mere courage but by laying hold of the living presence of Christ. After all, peace is our birthright through Christ. Peace with God. Peace of heart. Peace in trouble. Peace even in death.

*Illus.:* I watched a YouTube video of a Christian TV program from Egypt where the host interviewed by phone a man named Beshir. Two of Beshir's younger brothers, Bishoy and Samuel, were among those Christian men martyred by ISIS in March. *"They are a pride to Christianity,"* he said. *"Believe me when I tell you that the people here (the Christians) are not in a state of grief. They are congratulating one another. ... Since the Roman times, we as Christians have been targeted to be martyred. This only helps us to endure such a crisis because the Bible tells us to love our enemies and bless those who curse us."*

Beshir asked his mother what she would do if she met one of those ISIS members on the street. *"She said I will ask for God to open his eyes and ask him in our house."*

Then Beshir prayed, *"Dear God, please open their eyes to be saved and to quit their ignorance."*

Those brothers and sisters embody the peace of Christ and there are people who will put their faith in Jesus because of their peace. These are our people.

## **Conclusion**

Very quickly the tables are turning on evangelical Christians, not only in the world, but here in the U.S. In his column Nicholas Kristof said, *"A poll last year found that Americans approved more of gays and lesbians (53 percent) than of evangelical Christians (42 percent)."* But Jesus said, *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* Matt 5:11-12

If we are to impact this increasingly antagonistic world we will do it by the kind of believers we are. We need to be better than the Joshua in the storybook. If people are going to reject us let it be because we were like Christ. But let us believe what Jesus said that night before he died for our sins: *"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."* We will do greater

things because each of us and all of us who believe in Jesus will embody the risen Christ through...

- Our loving obedience
- Our grasp of gospel truth, and
- Our Christlike peace.