

Being of Sound Mind

John 14:23-29

INTRODUCTION

I have always been fascinated by the things people leave to one another in their wills. I don't know where or why this fascination began, and I don't know if it suggests there is some psychological issue going on inside my head. But it is true nonetheless.

Did you know, for example, that ...

- Billy the Kid, the famous outlaw, left an estate of over \$300,000 to anyone who could prove the existence of the human soul. To date, no one has ever filed a claim on that estate.
- The saddest will I have ever read about belonged to a Mr. Donahue who apparently did not like his daughters very much. Here's what his will said: "Unto my daughters Frances and Denise, I leave the sum of \$1 to each along with the following curse: May your respective lives be fraught with misery, unhappiness and sorrow. May your deaths be soon and of a lingering and torturous nature. And may your souls rest in hell to suffer the torments of the damned for all eternity." Wow. All that's missing is "Love, Dad."
- On a brighter note the American patriot Patrick Henry wrote this in his will: "I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is faith in Jesus Christ. If they had that and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich; and if they had not that and I had given them all the world, they would be poor indeed."

Some commentators refer to our text for today as the last will and testament of Jesus. Let me set it in its context. This is John 14. John chapter 13 is the story of the Last Supper. This chapter – as well as chapters 15, 16 and 17 – all happen on Maundy Thursday. Judas has already left the meal and is right now meeting with the Pharisees to betray Jesus. In just a few hours, Jesus will be arrested and tried and crucified.

Our text is a part of the final words in the earthly life of Jesus. His parting message to his followers. His last will and testament.

So what did He leave us? I think we come out pretty good. You should be well pleased.

#1: JESUS LEFT US THE HOLY SPIRIT

Look at verse 26:

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

Jesus was God in human form – the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. Therefore, Jesus was limited as to where could be. But the Holy Spirit has no such limitations. In fact, earlier in this chapter Jesus tells us the Holy Spirit will...

He lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)

Wherever I am, the Spirit is with me because He is in me. And He lives with me. I don't need to ask God to be with me, because He is already there. I simply need to remind myself of that truth.

The Psalmist said it like this:

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you. (Psalm 139:7-12)

I used to tell my kids that wherever they were, I was there watching. If they ever thought about doing something wrong, they needed to look over their shoulder, because I would be there. They may not see me, but I would be there watching. And whatever they did, I would know.

Being there is one part of the Holy Spirit's job description. There are several parts, too, that are expressed throughout this 14th chapter of John, and elsewhere in the Scriptures. But in our text today, Jesus highlights two specific tasks:

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

He will (1) teach you all things and (2) remind you of everything I have said.

When people tell me the Bible makes no sense to them, I always tell them about the Holy Spirit. The Bible is a spiritual book and it can only be understood through spiritual eyes. It is the Holy Spirit who takes the confusion out of the words and makes it sing in your heart. He teaches us all things.

- When those people tell me they are hesitant to talk to others about Jesus because they don't know what to say, I again tell them about the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who reminds of the words we are to speak.

Left to my own brain power, I would be helpless in any spiritual conversation. I can't remember where I laid my cell phone half the time. But the Holy Spirit brings to my mind – to your mind – what you need for that moment.

Let me share a practical way I see that working almost every week:

- I can stare at my computer screen for hours, trying to come up with a sermon to preach on Sunday. My own creativity and story-telling skills get me nowhere.
- But when I pray, "Holy Spirit, show me in this text what You want me to say" the words start to flow. In fact, it is almost a weekly occurrence that my sermon ends up in a far different place that I thought it would, as the Spirit brings to mind different Scriptures, and stories, and thoughts.

I, Jesus of Nazareth, being of sound mind, do hereby bequeath to all my followers ... the Holy Spirit.

#2: JESUS LEFT US HIS PEACE

Verse 27 says this:

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. (John 14:27)

Peace is a popular word right now. It is all over the news. Count the times you hear it!

- Diplomats from many countries are trying their best to negotiate peace between the Ukraine and Russia.
- Politicians are working hard to bring peace into troubled communities following more and more senseless shootings.

Locally, Wittenberg University has a Peace Center on its campus and runs a Peace Camp each summer for elementary school students.

I like peace, don't you? I will address conflict head on when I have to, but I really don't like it. So I am grateful that in His last will and testament Jesus left peace to us.

Notice that Jesus tells us right up front that His peace is different from the peace that the world offers.

- Diplomats and politicians just want the bullets to stop flying. If they do, they feel like they have achieved peace. If there is no obvious trouble, then peace exists.

Jesus doesn't think that way. In fact, He tells us the exact opposite.

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. (John 16:33)

Jesus doesn't promise to eliminate our troubles. No, troubles happen, even to those who follow Jesus. The greatest saint among has been promised trouble. But in the midst of it all, our hearts can be at peace.

On April 3, 1974 an F-5 tornado tore through the heart of Xenia, killing 33 people and injuring more than 1,300 others. It bulldozed a path more than a half-mile wide, destroying or damaging more than 1,400 buildings, including 1,200 homes, dozens of businesses, 10 churches, and several schools. One of the survivors of that tornado wrote this song as he surveyed what was left of his home and his life:

In twenty-four short hours
Years of living are brought to moments

There is peace in the midst of my storm-tossed life
There is an Anchor, there is a rock to build my faith upon
Jesus rides in my vessel so I fear no alarm
He gives me peace in the midst of the storm

I, Jesus of Nazareth, being of sound mind, do hereby bequeath to all my followers ... peace in the midst of their storms.

#3: JESUS LEFT US A GUARANTEE

Look at verses 28-29:

You heard me say, "I am going away and I am coming back to you..." I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.
(John 14:28-29)

Jesus is going away, but He is coming back. I can bank on it.

In the movie, "Hook," Robin Williams plays Peter Pan, who had left Neverland and had grown up to be a corporate attorney. He is completely focused on his job, and ends up neglecting his son over and over.

There is a line that he quotes from time to time in the beginning of the movie that sets the stage for the attitude of his son. When he promises to be at his son's baseball game, he says, "My word is my bond," meaning that if he makes a promise, it can be counted on. Unfortunately, he doesn't keep his word.

God put this promise in writing. It's guaranteed. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus states this guarantee in terms that are clear to all. You've heard this text many times at funeral services you have attended.

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.
(John 14:2-3)

The very nature of God means He cannot lie and will never change the terms of the guarantee. He is true to His Word every time and in every circumstance. You can bank on it.

I, Jesus of Nazareth, being of sound mind, do hereby bequeath to all my followers ... the guarantee that I will come back for them and that they will live with me for all of eternity.

APPLICATION

In 1866, Alfred Nobel invented dynamite and built up companies and laboratories in more than 20 countries all over the world. In the process, he amassed a considerable fortune.

When Nobel's brother died, the newspaper made a mistake and ran an obituary for Alfred Nobel. In the obituary they stated that he was known for creating the most destructive force known to mankind: dynamite. When Nobel read the obituary, he decided that he didn't want his family name remembered for destruction.

Something had to change. And it did.

On November 27, 1895, Nobel signed his final will and testament at the Swedish-Norwegian Club in Paris. A year later when he died, it was discovered that according to his will, his vast wealth was to be used for five prizes, including the one we know as the Nobel Peace Prize.

Just before his death, he confided the terms of his will to a friend, and that friend, "I want to be remembered for this, not for the destruction I made possible." And he is.

Jesus Christ will be remembered for many things, not the least of which is the forgiveness of sin made possible by His death on the cross. But we must never forget these other wonderful gifts that He left to us as well (the Holy Spirit, peace, guarantee).

Amen.