

Lessons of Loss - "Come follow me series..."

Discipleship: is God at work with us in our lives building us into a people of relationship.

The God of all creation has shown up among us, and He wants to know and be known by me...

In this series - we have been focussing in particular on the times when Jesus spoke directly to the twelve – imparting particular knowledge to them as those who were chosen, called out by name to be the ones who would carry on his message following his death.

And so we come to John 13 – where Jesus spends a very intimate time with these 12 in the hours leading up to his crucifixion.

By this stage – Jesus has already told his disciples several times of what lay ahead. But it seems pretty clear that they were slow to grasp that message. We wonder at that – thinking he was pretty straightforward, why didn't they get it?

Think for a moment about that. Do you understand or comprehend something the moment you are told it? Especially when that thing is actually quite a shock, something different to what you had in mind or upsetting....

We know that in part of us as humans – there is almost this shield against hearing hard news – it's like instead of going straight in our ears and to our brains and then heart – it kinda echoes around us.. and we feel these shock-waves. It does take us time to process things, to understand the feelings and reactions we have – and when things are too hard, sometimes we shut down.

And so – really, why would the disciples have fully comprehended what was about to happen to Jesus, and indeed why it had to happen. They were a bunch of 12 ordinary men who had been on an amazing ride for the past 3 years with a man they loved and respected. They had seen miracles – they had worked them themselves – they felt they had truly found their calling... and to have their leader say, "I'm off now guys"... was not in their plan at all.

There is so much in this passage – there is no way we can cover it all this morning... I want instead to draw out and have us consider **what Jesus imparts to his disciples about loss.**

The scene is set for us in the opening words of John 13:

1 Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. 2 It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. 4 So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, 5 and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

We get the picture, that although Jesus knows what is ahead for him – he is no way approaching that lightly... he really feels it – there is loss ahead for him to.

V 2 Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

21 Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!"

33 Dear children (little children), I will be with you only a little longer...

Have you thought about that before? What is Jesus about to lose?

- Loss of a friend, betrayal – not only Judas Iscariot – but also Peter was about to deny him also... and the others would also scatter once Jesus was arrested. We must remember that Jesus was a human like us – capable of all the feelings we have. How do you feel when you are betrayed, or when your friends don't stand beside you when things are tough? What if you had a friend say "I never knew you..." as Peter did.

- He also was about to lose that physical closeness he had experienced with these men that he loved. These guys had lived alongside each other for several years, going through so many different experiences together. I am sure the bro-mance was there... there was real mateship – and this extended to the physical in touch, in hugs... perhaps you can relate to how that feels when someone you love moves away. You might still be able to have contact with them over the phone or internet – but that physical closeness is gone.
- Loss of his physical, earthly life – he was physically about to die... and before that to experience painful floggings. This body – where Jesus had dwelt for some 30 years was about to breathe it's last.
- Loss of the gift of being human – he was about to be transformed to purely spirit again, giving up the physical connection he had with people and this world. It is actually a very special thing to be human – and Jesus had experienced the beauty of that... the senses of touch, taste – to be able to smell and see.. to bathe in the ocean, to eat a good meal.. some of these simple yet profound pleasures he had been able to enjoy.

There must be something pretty special about life – because most of us do not want to give it up! I have wondered in recent times about our inability to comprehend death. We know that it is a part of life. Every one of us who is born – must die – and yet we struggle so much to accept that, we seem to be so ill-equipped to deal with it.

And so we turn to the disciples – and we consider them in the face of the loss which they are about to endure.

Jesus had tried to prepare them for what was about to happen – as he drew closer and closer to his death – he spoke more clearly to them about what would happen. And yet, they were unable to fully grasp it – they wanted Jesus to stay, they couldn't imagine life without him.

Jesus comforted them – but he did more than that – he also made them some promises.

John 14 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going

to prepare a place for you? 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.”

The promise of eternity. Most of us hold that promise fairly lightly. It's something which is hard to grasp – but if we can live life with that perspective, particularly when we are facing loss – then it is the ultimate comfort.

Whatever comes to pass in this world, is temporary – the pain we feel, the changes we face, the sickness, the worry – all will pass – and we will live in a place where God has promised to wipe every tear from our eyes, where there will be no more death, pain or sorrow.

Eternity. This is our ultimate promise.

Jesus, then gave them another promise – and this one had more to do with life right now – something to help them right now.

John 14: 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be [\[c\]](#) in you. 18I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

The gift of the Holy Spirit – although the physical Jesus was about to die – he was not leaving his disciples to fend for themselves, but would now indwell them with His Spirit.

I wonder how long it is since you marvelled at that. That Jesus has given you His Spirit. That you are marked with the Holy Spirit.

Why do we need this Spirit? Well I've gotta say – if I only had the promise of a far off eternity to hold on to, and some legends of a great man who ended up dying – and nothing to tie it all together... I reckon I would have given up a long time ago.

Jesus explains to us the Holy Spirit will be a comforter, a counsellor, a teacher, a guide to remind us, the Spirit of truth.

V 26 But the Counselor, 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.

In our moments of loss – when life threatens to overwhelm us or discourage us – where can we turn?

In those moments we need to feel the presence of Jesus close, we need to have his words of life in our hearts and minds, we need his comfort, his truth, his counsel..... we need His spirit.

What were some of the things Jesus taught us, which the Spirit will remind us of in times of struggle?

- I will never leave you John 14:18 No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you
- Lay your burdens on me [Matthew 11:28](#) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matt 5:4)
- I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14: 3
- John 14: 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you

These are just a few – there are other words of comfort, assurances, promises – which are all for you! But we forget them don't we ... and we turn to worry and self-sufficiency, instead of rushing into the arms of the one who loves us fully and understands every thing about us.

Today – I wonder if it's time for each one of us to awaken again to the Holy Spirit – which is within each one of you who have chosen to follow Jesus.

Why would we need to awaken to the Spirit? Isn't the Spirit just there, doing his thing, being holy

I guess I see this a bit like prayer – while God knows everything, he asks us to pray – to give permission for him to work, to share with him our heart, our concerns, our worries.

And so – the Spirit also waits... we have this rich resource indwelling us – which we often ignore.

I think this comes down to the fact that we have free will – that is – the ability to decide for ourselves... that once we become a Christian, we are given His Spirit – but we choose to live in the flesh or by the Spirit moment by moment.

When we face challenges, times of loss – what do we need?

A counsellor. A comforter. Someone who will speak truth. Someone who will remind us of the great promise of eternity – where all pain will end. Someone who will speak words of life to us.

Romans 8: 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Can we take a moment to pray – to ask God to renew the work of His Spirit in our lives, to awaken us to Him – that we might receive more of his grace and love – and his comfort, in times of need.

(Pray for them.. give time – then NationsHeart....)

Eph 3:16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. 17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. 18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. 20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.