

The Things of Jesus

John 16:12-22

The Fifth Sunday of Easter, April 24, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

There are some passages of the Scripture that have no direct application to us.

That is not to say that every passage of the Scripture does not have any application to us. It is simply to say that not every passage of the Scripture has direct application to us. In order to apply all of Scripture to ourselves we first have to understand how it applies when it was originally written or in the case of our Lord's instruction of His disciples prior to His death we have to understand what He meant when He said it to them and then we can understand what it means for us.

On the night in which our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, He said to His disciples, "A little while and you will not see Me, and then after a little while you will see Me." The disciples did not know what He meant. They asked themselves, "What is this? What does He mean when He says, 'A little while and you will not see Me and again a little while and you will see Me,' and what does it mean when He says, 'I depart to the Father'?" They were confused by what He meant when He said, "a little while." Jesus is aware of their confusion and asks them, "Are you questioning one another and seeking to ask Me about what I said, 'In a little while you will not see Me and then again a little while and you will see Me'?"

By the time John records the answer of Jesus, he has recorded the statement, "After a little while you will not see Me and then after a little while you will see Me." It must be important if John is going to dwell on the fact that Jesus said and the disciples were confused by it and so Jesus said it again.

The answer of our Lord demonstrates that this statement does not have direct application to us. He explains by telling them that they will have grief while the world rejoices. Then He assures them that their grief will turn into joy. Given what Jesus has said about Himself so far the grief of the disciples will come upon them when they do not see Him and their grief will turn into joy when they see Him again.

Our Lord compares it to a woman who is giving birth. While she is in the pain of childbirth she is grieved. But when the child is born her grief turns into joy because a new person has been born into the world.

That means that when the disciples do not see Jesus they will have such pain like a woman in childbirth. And then when they see Him again, their grief will turn into joy because a new person has been born into the world.

Our Lord can only be talking about His own death and resurrection. When He says to the disciples, "In a little while you will not see Me," He is talking about a few hours from when He says this Judas will show up to betray Him. The soldiers will arrest Him and take Him to the home of Caiaphas. They will put Jesus to trial and find Him guilty. They will turn Him over to Pontius Pilate who will put Him to death. Then they will not see Him.

And then after a little while, they will see Him again. Namely after three days, Jesus will rise from the dead. After His resurrection, the disciples will see Him again and their grief will turn into joy.

It is of interest that our Lord uses childbirth as His illustration. The pains of childbirth are the result of the fall into sin when God cursed Eve with pain in childbirth. Once our Lord rises from the dead the curse of sin is removed and the end of painful childbirth is now within our reach. It is also of interest that a woman's pain and grief ends when she sees that a new person is born into the world. When our Lord rises from the dead after the pain that He underwent in order to bring forth a new creation, there is joy over the new creation that now exists.

Be that as it may, my point is that this passage refers to our Lord's death and resurrection. You and I are not supposed to try to figure out what it means for us when He says, "After a little while you will not see me and then again a little while and you will see Me."

I have heard many Christians try to do this. They typically wind up believing that when our Lord says, "Again a little while and you will see Me," that He is talking about His return in glory at the end of time. They then conclude that when our Lord says, "A little while and you will not see Me," He is talking about the fact that He is currently at the right hand of the Father and visible only by faith. This interpretation is one that I have held in the past, but it ignores totally the context in which Jesus originally said these words and it does not give any explanation for why Jesus compares such seeing and not seeing to a woman giving birth.

Only our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection explains why He talks about a woman giving birth and why their grief will turn into joy, so our Lord is talking about His death and resurrection. "A little while and you will not see Me," is His death. "Again a little while and you will see Me," is His resurrection.

Now I said earlier that not all passages of the Scriptures have direct application to us, but they all do have application to us. What does this have to do with us living about 2000 years after His resurrection?

It has application to us in regards to the Spirit. Our Lord teaches that whenever the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide us into all truth. He will not speak from Himself but as much as He hears, He will speak and He will announce the things which are coming to you. The Spirit will glorify Jesus because He will take the things of Jesus and announce them to us.

Now initially it looks like this does not have much application for us either. What Jesus is promising the original disciples is that the Holy Spirit will come upon them and when He does He will guide those disciples into all truth. He tells them that the Spirit will announce to them the things that are coming.

We know that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. We know that they began preaching. We know that the Holy Spirit revealed to them the things that were coming either eternal things or on occasion temporal things.

The point of application for us is that the Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus by taking the things of Jesus and making announcing them to the disciples.

Notice how the Holy Spirit does not glorify Himself. The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus.

There are many Christians today who are concerned that we do not talk about the Holy Spirit very much. They figure that since the Holy Spirit is God equal to the Father and the Son that means that He should receive as much attention as the Father and the Son do. Such Christians even go so far as to say that we are committing blasphemy against God when we talk about the Father and the Son all of the time and never talk about the Holy Spirit. Such Christians seek to make it up to the Holy Spirit by talking about Him a lot. They figure that this brings glory to the Holy Spirit, but it does not.

Such Christians are mistaken. The Scriptures do not lay out an equal division of attention between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we call the persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we are using vocational terms. We use these terms because the Scriptures, yea even Jesus Himself, uses these terms. If the Father is truly a father then He will fulfill the vocation of Father. If the Son is truly a son, then He will fulfill the vocation of son. The Father fulfills His vocation by loving the

Son and by having expectations of Him. The Son fulfills His vocation by being obedient to the Father and fulfilling the will of the Father, chiefly by dying and rising again for the world's salvation.

Now when I use the term "vocation" understand that I do not believe that there is something out there other than the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who would issue a vocation to the Father and the Son. Father Himself calls Himself, "Father." Once He does so, He by definition lays upon Himself the obligations of Father and lays upon the Son the obligations and responsibilities of Son.

If terms like "Father" and "Son" indicate a vocational responsibility for them then what does the term "Holy Spirit" indicate? Well in regards to vocation nothing jumps out. He is simply a Spirit who is holy. If the term "Holy Spirit" does not indicate the responsibilities of the Holy Spirit or even what He will do, then Jesus needs to lay them out for us and He does so. The Holy Spirit will take from the things of Jesus and announce them to the original disciples so that they may announce them to us.

What are the things of Jesus? Well, "in a little while you will not see Me and again a little while and you will see Me." The things of Jesus are His death and resurrection. Therefore if the Spirit is going to glorify Jesus, He will do so by announcing the things of Jesus. The chief things of Jesus are His death and resurrection.

Therefore in order to have a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit, you need to talk about Jesus all of the time particularly His death and resurrection. If a congregation does not focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus and its significance, it does not have the Spirit. A congregation that is filled with the Spirit talks about the death and resurrection of Jesus and its significance a lot.

To focus on the Holy Spirit is to do what the Spirit Himself does not want you to do and so dishonors the Spirit. To focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus is to do what the Spirit wants you to do and therefore honors the Spirit. So just as honoring the Son honors the Father, in a slightly different way, honoring the Son honors the Spirit also.

The other application for us is that this makes clear what "the things of Jesus" are. They are His death and resurrection. This does a lot of things for us.

There are some people who talk about Jesus a lot, but never talk about His death and resurrection. Unless they talk about His death and resurrection, they are either not talking about Jesus really, but simply using His name, or they are not talking about Jesus at all.

For example, some people will quote Jesus in order to justify a certain social theory. Ok, but unless they talk about the death and resurrection of Jesus, they are not talking about the real Jesus. Some people will quote Jesus in order to justify some form of social justice for which they advocate. That is fine, but unless they talk about the death and resurrection of Jesus, they misunderstand Jesus and therefore cannot quote Him authoritatively. There are some people who say the name of Jesus a lot, but unless they are talking about His death and resurrection saying His name a lot does them no good. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the things of Jesus. They are things that the Holy Spirit announces.

There are movies about God or about Jesus. Unless they show at least His death and resurrection, they are not movies about Jesus. There are plays and books about Jesus, websites about Jesus. Unless they talk about His death and resurrection, they are not about the real Jesus. You may read them or see them if you like, but do not fear what they fear or treasure what they treasure. They will lead you astray.

This is true also of ancient documents. I am sure that many of you have heard about the "Gospel of Judas" or the "Gospel of Mary Magdalene." There is even a "Gospel of Thomas" but the "Gospel of Thomas" does not get the press that he used to get because the "Gospel of Judas" and the "Gospel of Mary Magdalene" are more recent discoveries.

Scholars will show up on TV to talk about these ancient documents. They will generally say something like this, "These ancient manuscripts indicate that there were many accounts of the life of Jesus circulating in the ancient Christian community." They will then proceed to answer the question that if there were other ancient documents circulating in the ancient world why were they not included in the Bible? Why did only Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John make it in? In general the explanations that I have heard from scholars is that it had something to do with misogyny. In other words the explanation that the scholars give for why the "Gospel of Mary Magdalene" was excluded is because the scholars think that the ancient men who were in charge of the church oppressed women by excluding a book from the Bible that gives Mary Magdalene a prominent position among the apostles and by embracing gospels like Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John who do not.

Such an explanation does not explain why the "Gospel of Judas" was excluded. And such an explanation does not explain why the "Gospel of Thomas" was left out for the "Gospel of Thomas" records that our Lord said that salvation was impossible for women unless they were made into men first. If the early church were really as misogynistic as these scholars claim then why isn't the "Gospel of Thomas" included in the Bible?

If you have heard other explanations for why these so called "Gospels" of Thomas, Judas, or Mary Magdalene were excluded from the Bible I would like to hear what they are.

And this does raise an interesting question: what belongs in the Bible? Are all of the books there that should be there? Is something left out that should be there? When pastor and the church base their message on the Scripture are they basing their message on something that is reliable? If you young people in the congregation have not thought of these questions already, then surely someone will bring them to your attention who wants to pull you away from faith in Jesus. If you are thinking about leaving faith in Jesus as soon as you get out of your parents house and on your own, you will likely use this excuse among others to leave the faith and go over to Satan. In other words if someone does not want to believe in Jesus it is easy for them to say to themselves, "Well, the Bible doesn't have everything in it that it should have in it, therefore it is unreliable and I don't have to listen to its message."

Now that I have raised the issue I have to give an answer. The answer is simple. The reason that the so called gospels of Thomas, Mary Magdalene, and Judas were not included in the canon of Scripture is because they do not record the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As long as they do not record the death and resurrection of Jesus, they are not telling you the things of Jesus. They are therefore not of the Spirit and not to be trusted. Everything is about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The death and resurrection of Jesus save us. Those events forgive us. Those events take away our sin and make us new people in Christ Jesus. Those events reveal who Jesus really is. They are everything and so they are the things of Jesus and they are the things that the Spirit announces to us.

The things of Jesus also allow us to spot Him when He shows up. Sometimes the Lord shows up in the most unusual of places. I have pointed out the Christ figure in the movie *Frozen*. Some of you understood what I meant right away because you know the things of Jesus. I have pointed out how Yoda is mistaken and those of you who know the things of Jesus know that he is mistaken. I have pointed out the Christ figure in *Harry Potter* and some of you understand it because you understand the things of Jesus and some of you do not because you don't like *Harry Potter*. You have never seen *Frozen*. And that is fine. My point is that the Spirit helps you identify Jesus when He shows up in odd places by announcing to you the things of Jesus. The Spirit also helps you spot a false Jesus who uses the name of Jesus, but never talks about His death and resurrection and its significance for us. That is a false Jesus.

So the application may be secondary, but it is important nonetheless. The Spirit announces to you the things of Jesus and that makes it possible for you to know Him when you meet Him.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.