

“...because He lives.”

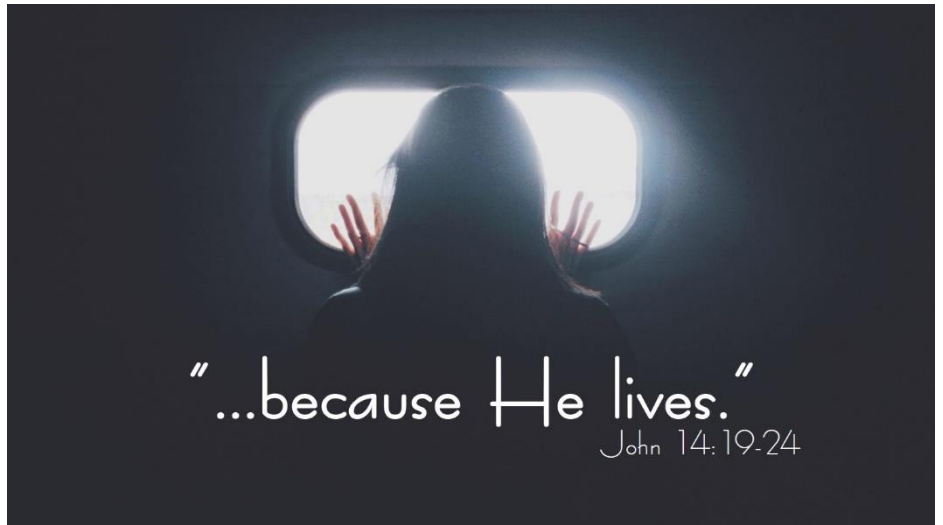
*John 14:19-24*

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at **JF Believers Church**

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**John 14:19-24** *"A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. 20 "At that day you will know that I am in My*

*Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.*

Buddha's dead. So is Confucius. So is Muhammad. In fact, those men never claimed power over death, and further, they never claimed to be deity. On that matter, Jesus stands alone. Jesus tells His disciples that because *He* lives, that *they* will live also. But what does He mean "to live?"

If I were to ask you this morning just what "living" is, I think we might get a plethora of answers. The answer to that question seems to be in the "eye of the beholder." But we can gather from the use of the word that Christ was speaking of more than just living as in "lungs breathing and heart beating." He also seems to be speaking of more than just the coming eternal life. He seems to be eluding to a quality...a state of being which reaches beyond just, *well*, being here and existing. The word "live" herein means "both to live, breathe, be among the living ...not lifeless, not dead." And also "to have true life and worthy of the name... active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of God."

We can want is to rewrite this passage to say, "Because Jesus is alive, *things will go well for me.*" Because Jesus is alive, my life will be without difficulties...I will be financially secure...I will be healthy and spry...my relationships will be forever edifying. But one need only walk the path of Christ for a short time to discover that it just isn't so. These positional elements are but a fantasy! They are not the reality of a life with Christ. Jesus says that we will "live." That doesn't speak of existence void of pain or trials. It does however speak of a life large. A life of meaning, purpose, and a peace and joy that the world will not know or understand.

"*Because I live...you will live also...*" Most folks grasp at least the rudimentary concept that Jesus claims to give His followers eternal life after this life ends. While such a promise is an awesome prize waiting at the end of this journey, Jesus is offering more. For we must grasp the doctrinal truth that when a person is reborn, his or her new life begins here and now, not in the far away future "afterlife." We live in the kingdom of God **now**...in the promises of God **now**, in the arms of God right **now**. We see differently, think differently, and want different things than the world. We are "new creatures." For us the sky is bluer, the stars a little brighter, and relationships more precious. But don't expect the world to understand you because they won't.

Pastor Mark Driscoll a few years ago financed a "town-hall, round-table" type gathering of non-christians to find out their thoughts about believers and their faith. One of the statements a woman made therein has stuck with me.

When asked about Christians she said “I don’t trust them...they’re all a little too happy.” Well, we wouldn’t want to have that would we? No, the world doesn’t get it and they never will. They don’t have the eyes for it.

“...and the world will see me no more.” So where is Jesus? Why can people seemingly “see Him no more?”

Jesus, herein speaking of his not-so-distant future, was remarking that very soon the world would not see him any longer. Perhaps even we can be left wondering as to just what He meant. For ironically we live in a day where self-proclaimed Christian churches dot our countries landscape and are found on the corners of small towns and cities throughout America. Our money claims that “In God we Trust” and evangelicalism on radio, TV, print and internet media is easy to find. Even today, the Christian bible is the bestselling, most read book in history. So how is it that Jesus says the “world will see Him no more?” Perhaps there is a chasm of difference between what we believe to be faith interaction and actually interacting with the object of that faith.

Do you see Jesus today in your world? Are you even looking for Him? Are you looking to engage, interact, and actually know him personally and intimately or is the totality of your contact with Him merely on a corporate and institutional level? I don’t have to tell you that it is so very loud out there today. The noise of the world borders upon chaos at times, and we are seemingly barraged by other actors and different scenes than the “one on one” dynamic that Jesus was no doubt speaking about herein. What we generally see today is a world of greed, lust, and power. A world of materialism, and ego-centric fleshly pursuits. Self love, self absorption, self preservation, self promotion and self pride. And through it all and yes, *despite it all*, there remains an ongoing vein of reality that reflects both a personal and national sadness. A “dissatisfaction.” A “disappointment.”

It’s hard to not throw our hands up in despair, panic, or disgust at the world around us. We are shocked at the behavior of people these days. Incidents of road rage, school and workplace shootings, sexual abuse, corporate corruption and personal dishonesty. We stand shocked at the levels of immorality around us. Shocked at the apathy of people toward spiritual things and toward the people to whom they matter. Shocked at the violence and sex being produced by Hollywood. What is this world coming to!?!?

It’s the cry of the conservative media. Religious television shows, and faith-based radio shows ...the multitude of Christian blogs, and podcasts, ...they all seem to perpetuate the “what is this world coming to?” attitude. It is so easy to lament over the decay of morals...the absence of any righteousness in the world. We tend to harken back to a “better time.” Whatever happened to the good old days, when a fella could leave his car unlocked without fear of having his stereo stolen? Whatever happened to the days when kids would actually respect authority? Whatever happened to the days when young men and women actually treated each other with courtesy, instead of just trying to get the other one in bed?

But we shouldn’t be shocked or dismayed. The world is coming to exactly what Jesus said it would come to. Jesus had warned us even then that “...because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12) Perhaps the only one who is not shocked and surprised is Christ Himself. The Beatles once quipped “I’ve got to admit it’s getting better, It’s a little better all the time.” Well boys, I hate to rain on your parade, but it’s not getting better! It’s steadily getting worse. I could give the statistics but I think if we are all honest, it isn’t necessary...

In fact, the world we live in today seems far from surprising for Jesus, and far from a new situation. For in Genesis 6:5, God looked down on the earth and was grieved by what he saw: “*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” In fact, God brought the great flood upon the earth because the wickedness of man was so great. Every intent, every desire, every thought, was bent toward evil. When we read such an account it’s hard to not see the similarity to our world today!

Peter spoke in his first letter about just this sort of crisis. Things were bad in those days with Nero running around burning Christians as torches to light his driveway. Peter told the believers to pull themselves together and be strong.” To “*have your minds ready for action. Keep alert and set your hope completely on the blessing which will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*” (1 Peter 1:13) Jesus wasn’t and *isn’t* particularly concerned with the most recent Barna report, or church growth study, or the state of Hollywood. He will build his church, and there is absolutely nothing that can stop him.

Should we be concerned about increasing immorality in the schools, and on television, and in politics? Sure. Where appropriate, we should stand for righteousness. And, of course, we should instruct our kids how to think biblically about the sin they will most certainly encounter. But if we’re constantly outraged, disgusted, discouraged, or panicked, then we haven’t come to grips with the Bible’s grim description of the world, and we aren’t fully trusting in our coming, conquering, reigning king.

Yeah, it’s bad. And it’s gonna get worse. But the gospel will continue to triumph, Jesus will remain on the throne, and Jesus will finally rid the world of wickedness.

C.S. Lewis once was quoted saying “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” The “life” that Christ was speaking of here...the “life” that He promised is found in the reborn life that He has provided by the cross and His resurrection. A life that now has our “eyes opened” to His presence. I personally see Christ everywhere and in everything. In the miracle of babies, in the marvel of nature and the wonder of the human body. I find Him in laughter, good friends, a full moon, and ducks flying south in winter. A salmon will be born and go out and find the very river he was spawned in and swim right back to the very spot. Back to the very stream where he was conceived! Such things scream God’s reality to me.

I am perplexed as to why some folks have such a time trying to see Him for I simply cannot *not* see Him everywhere and in everything! As promised, the world apparently does not see Him, but I see Him. Ephesians 1:16-19 says “*I do not cease to give thanks... (that) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power...*” Jesus Himself said in Matthew 13:16-17 “*But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but they didn’t see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn’t hear it.*”

Some 2000 years ago, Jesus departed this physical body, departed this physical world. But for those of us who love Him, He is not gone. For His Spirit has actually come to live with us. The world has seen Him no more, but *we* see Him. Those of us who are His see Him every day. In a few chapters, *after all of the cross, the resurrection, His return to the Father*, will come the second chapter of Acts. Jesus would send His Comforter. On that day we would know “*...He was in His Father...that we are in Him, and He is in us.*”

From the beginning of the faith, men have sought for Christ to show Himself, and to do so in some dramatic fashion. Men have sought to set Him up as king and conqueror, and today of course, we want to make Him president, *or at least elect a president that would rule as Christ*. We want the flash, the miraculous, the spectacular. The world approaches Christ with a circus attitude. We want to applaud and cheer, we want to ‘Ooh and Aah.’ The world has never understood Jesus, it does not grasp His purpose and His revelation. The world does not know Him, nor *can* they know Him.

1Co 2:14 *But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.*

He all have a choice. Ignore the obvious, rewrite the past, reinterpret the meaning, or change our thinking and receive the clear truth as presented by Christ. The bottom line is, did Jesus say what He meant and mean what He said? Or was He speaking in abstract metaphors and deep philosophical meanings which are open to numerous interpretations? The world does not understand how *they* can see Him, how *they* can know Him, because their eyes have not been opened by the rebirth that Christ brings us.

The reason the world cannot see Him is they are still looking "out there." But Jesus says here in this passage that *WE* will come into that disciple, making *OUR* home with him. Jesus is clearly emphasizing the coming of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, He shares the reality of the trinity, the triune God: *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. You see, the scriptures already tell us in Acts 7:48 that "...*the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands...*" No, His home is **within us**. It is there that we see Him. It is only there that we find Him. It is within that intimate relationship that we find communion with God, when the rest of the world is running madly around seeking for that which they cannot see or know.

Without the Holy Spirit in us, we are blind. This explains the absolute foolishness we see in those who profess to know God, but reject His obvious instruction, readily hurt themselves and those around them, and plunge headlong into the abyss of worldly, self-centered darkness. The lack of sight is because they are not filled with the Spirit of God. No extra-biblical judgment of spiritual condition is necessary to know this fact. When a person is constantly running headlong into a brick wall resulting in a spiritual 'bloody nose,' and when confronted, denies the wall, denies the bloody nose, denies your clarity and denies your right to point out the brick wall, that is a person who remains in the dark.

The text says "...*if anyone loves Me, he will keep My word...*" It is not condemnation, nor unloving judgment to understand that if we *don't* keep His Word, we *don't* love Him.

In such a state, according to this passage, there is no promise of indwelling presence. His love continues, but is not received by the disobedient, prodigal son. The prodigal's Father *loved* him, but by his own lack of proximity (the fact He fled the presence of the Father's relationship), there was no love received by the rebellious son.

We must never make the fatal mistake in believing that somehow disobedience to God is a trivial matter in light of God's grace. Jesus *died* so that we would have the power to overcome. To reject the cross is to reject salvation, reject Christ, and reject eternal life with God.

I have known many who claim they love Jesus in one breath, and then openly admit to continuing in disobedience in the next. Such is blindness. They do not see Christ. Such is absence of the Holy Spirit. *Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.* 1 Jn 3:24

Romans 6 brings these thoughts together, saying "*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*"

We live, because he lives. We live, because He lives in us. We see Him, because He is not far away at all. He is right here inside us...the still small voice saying "turn to the left, turn to the right..."