

New Year's 2023

New years is always an interesting time. The calendar changes and we use it as a time to take inventory, reflect, make resolutions, and think about what the next year will be like. As New Year's approached, I have had one thought that I keep coming back to, It has been a year. We have faced things as a body that none of us saw coming. And yet as I have reflected on this past year one common the thread keeps coming up. God has been so faithful. He has walked with us and guided us in amazing ways. As I was praying about what to teach on this morning, I was drawn to John 14. This is a familiar passage, but it has such a profound meaning.

John 14:1 ESV

(1) "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.

Let not your heart be troubled. Meaning their heart are currently troubled. To understand why Jesus needs to say this we need context of what is going on. John 13 describes the beginning of the last Supper. This is in the upper Room and Jesus is going to pour into his disciples before the events of His crucifixion really get going. He washes their feet. He predicts that one will betray Him. After this, Judas leaves to betray Christ. John says in verse 28 no one really understood what was going on. Then Christ starts teaching.

John 13:33 ESV

(33) Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek Me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'

Jesus lets them know that He is about to leave them. He is going to the cross, to His death and they cannot follow Him. This entire meal has been unsettling. They are still processing why Jesus washed their feet. Why did Judas just rush out? Where is Jesus going? Why would He leave us? This is too much for Peter, and He needs to ask more details.

John 13:36-38 ESV

(36) Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow afterward."

(37) Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

(38) Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied Me three times.

Peter wants to know where Jesus is going and why they can't follow. Peter picks up a little that Jesus is talking about going to the cross and offers to lay his life down for Jesus. Jesus in His love and patience reveals what is really in Peter's heart. Peter will deny Christ 3 times before the morning. At this statement the apostles are reeling. Nothing is happening how they expected. Jesus knows the turmoil in their souls. He knows their doubts and worries. Then He says...

John 14:1 ESV

(1) "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.

Troubled means to be shaking, stirred up, being in inward turmoil, unsettled, thrown into confusion. How could they not be. Nothing is happening how the expected. Jesus is going to leave them, Judas already left and now Peter is going to deny Jesus. It seems like the wheels are falling off.

Jesus does not want them to be troubled. He wants them to Believe in God and Himself. Believe means to trust in. Listen to the definition of the word: **to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust, to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence.** He looks at the disciples and asks them to trust not only the Father but in Him. He knows none of this makes sense, He knows they are in turmoil, and He says the only way out of your turmoil, the only way for your heart not to be troubled is to believe, trust in Me. Then the amazing thing is Jesus gives us a reason to trust Him.

John 14:2-3 ESV

- (2) In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you **that I go to prepare a place for you?**
- (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.**

This promise is amazing and has such a rich meaning in the cultural context. This is more than just a simple promise, this is a marriage proposal. We can't understand it if we don't know that the Church is called the bride of Christ. When Paul is describing how believers living in our new life should care for each other in marriage he has this to say:

Ephesians 5:25; 31-32 ESV

- (25) Husbands, love your wives, **as Christ loved the church** and gave Himself up for her,
- (31) "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."
- (32) **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

Paul links Jesus' love for the Church to that found in a marriage between a husband and wife. Jesus is the groom; the church is His bride. Jesus cares for us deeply. We are His bride. It helps to understand what marriage process looked like to understand where in the process we are with Christ.

The agreement/ Ketubah/ Betrothal

Once a bride was chosen then came the Ketubah, or betrothal this is a wedding covenant. The couple was viewed as legally married after this was agreed to. They did not consummate the marriage for begin living with each other yet, but legally were viewed as married. This is where Mary and Joseph were in the process when she became pregnant.

Payment of the Dowry The mohar

Once the wedding covenant was agreed to the groom had to pay the price of the dowry. This was viewed as a way to honor the wife and show how she was valued.

Groom would prepare the house.

Once the wedding covenant had been set the groom would leave and go back to his father's house to prepare the house for his bride.

Call for the Wedding

The groom would return usually a year later to go and get his bride.

The Huppah/Ceremony/Celebration

"There would be a short ceremony, and then the bride and groom retired to the place he had prepared (huppah/chuppah/wedding chamber).

The Marriage Supper –

Following the ceremonial proceedings of the huppah, **is the marriage banquet, also sometimes called the wedding feast or marriage festival.**

What is amazing is to see how Jesus has fulfilled these steps with the church. We are His bride. Christ paid the dowry by dying on the cross and purchasing us with His blood.

Acts 20:28 ESV

(28) Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for **the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood.**

Christ obtained us through His blood. No other payment would be enough. So, John 14 is Jesus making the wedding covenant with us. He is promising that He is going to prepare a house for us, just as the groom would leave so Christ would leave. He is telling it to the apostles who will help establish the church. He is promising to come back to us to collect us as His bride.

John 14:1-3 ESV

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(2) In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you **that I go to prepare a place for you?**

(3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.**

We are waiting on our Groom to come get us. I have been wondering what that year was like for the bride. In a year she was to be married. **How did she spend that year?**

A common passage that came up is Matthew 25, of the 10 virgins waiting for the groom. This does not directly apply to us, we are the bride, that parable is about the wedding party waiting for the groom after He has gone to get His bride. It is about Israel in the tribulation.

We are the bride waiting on our Groom. He left to prepare a place for us. **So, what are we to do today?** Do we just sit around waiting for Him to come? This is why I was drawn to study this for today. We are not supposed to just sit and wait. **Because our Groom is coming back we should live with more energy and excitement than ever.** Scripture describes what us waiting on our Groom looks like.

As we wait for our Groom we are to be a pure bride.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3 ESV

(2) For I feel a divine jealousy for you, **since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.**

(3) But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be **led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

Paul says we have been betrothed to one husband. We are to be a pure bride when our Groom comes to get us. There are many things out in the world that are trying to deceive us and draw us away. Notice what they are after, leading us from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. The word sincere means a singleness, or simplicity. We add so many things to the Christian walk. It is about Christ and walking with Him.

As we wait for our Groom, we are to fall in love with Him

In Jewish culture this was an arranged marriage. The bride and groom had spent very little time together. The bride was to start the process of falling in love with the groom.

We can only fall in love with Him if we know Him

We cannot be in love with someone if we don't know them. You can love them in a big picture sense, sure. But to actually be in love with them, you need to know them. Who are they? What do they love? What do they dislike? Etc.

1 John 4:8 ESV

(8) Anyone who **does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

If you do not love, then you really don't know Him. We come to love when we know Him more. Know who He is and how amazing He is. He has shown us His love so we can love.

1 John 4:9-10 ESV

(9) **In this the love of God was made manifest** among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, **so that we might live through Him.**

(10) **In this is love**, not that we have loved God but **that He loved us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Our relationship with God is about His tremendous love for us. He sent Christ to die on the cross for our sins. Our love for Him is a response the focus is about His love for us. As we wait on our Groom, we grow in our love for Him when we see how much He has loved us.

As we wait for our Groom, we are to trust Him

The bride needs to trust her groom. Will He do what He claimed? Will He actually return? Is His house as good as He claimed? Think about all the questions the bride would have as she waited for her groom to show back up. This is why the passage in John 14 is so important. Jesus is our groom and He is asking us to trust Him. He is promising to come back and get us at the rapture.

John 14:1-3 ESV

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- (2) **In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?**
- (3) **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.**

Don't let your heart get stirred up and worried, we can trust Christ. He is going to make good on His promises. Jesus literally says in my Father's dwelling place, there are many places to abide. **And Jesus is preparing unimaginable things for us.**

In 1995 a scientist used Hubble to look at a patch of sky that seemed empty. Many thought it was a waste of resources and he almost lost his job until they saw the picture. Hubble saw over 3000 galaxies in the patch of sky that was “empty.” Nasa just launched a new telescope, called the James Webb Telescope. One of the First things they did with it is point it out at another patch of empty space to see what was there. The image is incredible. **(Show Webb Image Here)** There are so many galaxies and wonders than we could ever imagine. To put it in perspective of what part of the night sky we are looking at, Nasa said to take a grain of sand and hold it up to the sky at arms distance, that's the area this picture represents.

Isaiah 40:21-22 ESV

- (21) Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
- (22) It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; **who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;**

When our Groom Christ says He is going to make us places to abide in His Father's dwelling place, our future is grand. We can trust Him!

As we wait for our Groom, we are to talk about Him

A bride who is head over heels in love with her groom can't stop talking about how amazing her groom is.

Song of Solomon 5:11-12; 16 ESV

- (11) His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven.
- (12) His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.

(16) His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. **This is my beloved** and this is my friend, **O daughters of Jerusalem.**

Listen to how this bride describes her groom to her friends. She is enamored with who He is. When we fall in love with Christ, we won't be able to not talk about Him. Evangelism won't be a problem; we will gush over who He is. As we wait for our groom lets tell everyone about how amazing He is!

John 14:3-6 ESV

(3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.

(4) **And you know the way to where I am going."**

(5) Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going. **How can we know the way?"**

(6) Jesus said to him, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

The only way to be saved is through Jesus Christ. We have a truly amazing God who has done so much for us. Let's share this hope with others. **The world is without hope. We not only have a hope we know His name, Jesus Christ.**

As we wait for our Groom, we are get our clothes ready

Revelation 19:6-10 ESV

(6) Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

(7) Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, **for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready;**

(8) it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" — **for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.**

(9) And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

This is a scene that takes place in Heaven. It is after the rapture. Our groom has come to get us. It is time for the wedding ceremony. We as the bride have been made ready for this moment. We have put on an amazing dress. Verse 8 is unexpected though. The dress we are clothed in is the righteous deeds of the saints.

This is after the Bema seat. Only the eternal rewards are left. Christ righteousness clothes us to save us. **But for this wedding the church will be wearing a dress of the eternal things He has accomplished through us.**

As we wait on our Groom, we are preparing that dress right now. This new year lets wait for our groom with more passion and energy than ever before. He is that amazing!