

Come and See: The Upper Room

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[0 : 00] I want to turn to John 15. John 15. Last week we began our journey to the empty tomb by being encouraged to pray about inviting others to come and see because Christ has a lot to offer.

And if you have Christ in your life, you lose nothing by sharing him with others. Actually, it is our gain to do that because we're blessed by it.

We become stronger in our faith by it. And so we ought to be busy about it. All of the gospels build up to the last week of Christ.

And that week starts with a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus rides in on a donkey. The reason he does that is to fulfill prophecy.

Zechariah 9 verse 9 says, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you.

[1 : 05] Righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on donkey. On a colt, the fall of a donkey. His way was paved by laying down garments.

That speaks of royalty. That's what you did for kings. It was also marked by people laying down palm branches, which speak of peace.

What it paints the picture of is a humble king coming in peace and claiming his place. As he came, they cried out, Hosanna, which means save us, which is the proclamation of the Messiah.

They said, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That was originally spoken about those who were approaching the temple for worship. Here it is to announce the Christ as Messiah, the one that actually fulfills everything that the temple amounted to.

Shortly after he entered, he makes his way to the upper room to share a last supper with the disciples before he would go to the garden and be arrested.

[2 : 16] He washed their feet there. Peter was in the room. Peter didn't feel comfortable with him washing his feet. He knew that was the lowest of the servants to do that.

He didn't feel comfortable with that. And so Peter, he's that dude that always thinks and says it, you know, or says it before he thinks it or something like that, you know.

If you've got a big mouth, you sympathize with Peter, okay? And so he says, Look, you're not lowering yourself to wash my feet.

I'd never let you do that. Jesus responds and says, If I don't wash you, you have nothing to do with me. And Peter says, Well, then wash all of me, you know. I mean, he really didn't get it. He really didn't.

And Jesus said, I've washed your feet. Now wash others. In other words, what he was telling us is, I've served you at the lowest level. Because the foot washer was the lowest servant in the house washing the dirt and the grime off of the feet as a greeting to folks.

[3 : 23] Almost like taking your coat. Instead, they'd wash your feet. And it's Christ's way of saying, Do whatever you need to do to serve other people.

He begins the meal like that. During the meal, he confronts Judas, the traitor in the bunch. And Judas goes on to make a decision that will ruin him quickly.

Peter speaks up again and says, I'll never deny you. And Jesus says, Sit down. You'll deny me three times before the sun comes up, basically.

That's when the rooster crows, by the way. He continues to speak to the disciples in the longest teaching and training time that we have anywhere in Scripture of Jesus.

There are 156 verses of his teaching dedicated to the upper room. And everything that he said and everything that he prayed, the Sermon on the Mount is only 110 verses.

[4 : 26] That's significant. The timing of the event is significant. It's the last thing he says to them before he goes to the garden to be arrested. The teaching that he gives them is primarily for them

after he would no longer be physically present with them.

We are a people that live today in Christ when he's not physically present with us. So it's a word for us. And then the training that he gives them is amazing.

He begins by talking about how he is the way, the truth, and the life. And he gives us an assurance for salvation in the here and the now. And he gives us assurances that he'll always be there for us. That there's more to eternal life in Christ than what this world has to offer. This ain't all there is, folks. And he's very clear about that in the upper room.

And when he has died and been buried and rose again and ascended, he assures us that we will not be left alone. We will not be comfortless.

[5 : 35] The Holy Spirit will come. The Holy Spirit will empower us. He'll guide us. And he'll use us. And then he closes his time in the upper room in John 17.

It's often called the high priestly prayer because Jesus closes out his time in the upper room praying for his disciples. As he progresses through the prayer, he prays for those that the disciples will reach.

As he continues to progress, he prays for those that will be reached by those that are reached by the disciples. Do you know who that is? That's us.

He's praying for us. And do you know what he prays for us? He prays for us to be unified for his cause so that all the world can see him for who he is.

Now you're going to be glad to hear what I'm about to say because I will tell you that John chapter 13 through 17 is too much teaching for one time.

[6 : 44] Okay? I could literally spend a year of Sundays teaching John 13 through 17 and I'm not going to do, I'm not going to try to squeeze five chapters out of you this morning.

To attempt to scan that this morning hastily I believe would be unjust and I will not do it. I just want us to, I encourage you to read it this week, but I just want us to dip our toe in a key portion of this passage that reminds us of how we are to do what we are to do for the Lord.

I just want to take a few moments, you're going to love this, to look at one verse. One key verse. It was key for them that day.

It is key for us today. He goes on to define what this verse means and the Apostle Paul spends a lot of time defining what it means. It's John chapter 15 verse 5.

And Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches, whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me, you can do nothing.

[8 : 11] We are to bear fruit. How do you bear fruit when you abide in Christ? Well, Scripture shows us that and it's a lot more broad in scope than you probably thought because when we are saved, when we surrender our lives to the Lord Jesus, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

And when our lives are hooked into the vine, getting a full run of the sap from the Lord, our lives produce fruit. Just like a healthy branch of a fruit tree produces fruit.

So what kind of fruit are we to produce? Our fruit ought to be characterized by character. We ought to produce a fruit of character.

There are obvious traits in the lives of folks that are right with the Lord. Paul put it this way. In Galatians chapter 5 verse 22 and 23, he says this, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things, there is no law. Now I will tell you that the fruit of the Spirit is not for you to pick and choose what fruit that you want.

[9 : 35] Instead, we're responsible for all of them to live it out. And listen, he's not talking about being fake here either. As disappointing as it would be if you saw a big, beautiful basket of fruit and said, Man, I want one of those apples right off the top and went and grabbed that and it was one of those plastic things, you know, that looked so good, but in reality it's not.

Sometimes Christians can be just as fake as that. They can be just as bad as that. Real love is not smiling or even telling people that you love them.

Real love, 1 Corinthians 13, 7 says, always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Now, I will tell you to be clear, because I don't want you to misunderstand me, when you love somebody, you ought to tell them.

Men, I'm particularly speaking to you this morning because it's not manly sometimes to, we think it's not manly to tell somebody that you love them, but the reality is it's not manly to not tell them.

Those that God has entrusted to you, that you love them. Reva McIntyre sang a song years ago called *The Greatest Man I Never Knew*, and one of those lines says, he never said he loved me, guess he thought I knew, and she's talking about her daddy.

[11:02] Your family, your loved ones need to know it by how you live it and how you tell them. And if you're dropping off a teenager at school, you roll the window down or let the window down and you yell it out to them.

They love that. You tell them how much you love them, right in front of all their friends. It's great. It's great. They deserve it. Instead of fussing and fighting, have joy.

Instead of factions and feuds, promote peace. Instead of bringing discord, be patient. Instead of being selfish, be kind. Instead of living without restraint, embrace genuine goodness.

Instead of envying everyone, be faithful. Be trustworthy. Be dependable. Instead of being jealous and resentful and revengeful, be gentle toward other folks.

Instead of being filled with rage, exhibit self-control. It will stand out in the society that we live in today. Produce a real basket of fruit.

[12:08] Not that plastic Sunday morning fake stuff. But the real stuff. We're to be people bearing the fruit of good character.

We also are to be people who are bearing the fruit of compassion. And that's what he talks about in this context. Because he says in John 15 verse 12, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Now if you really want to know what a verse is talking about, read the verses around it. And the verses around it point exactly to that. Now if you love God, you obey him. And he's telling us to reflect that kind of love that he has for us.

He goes on in verse 13 to say this. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You're my friends if you do what I command you.

We live in a day when there's a lot of lashing out. There's a lot of pointing fingers at somebody else. And many things are done and said in a hateful attitude.

[13:11] And I will tell you it is so easy for us to jump right in that fray. To be just a part of that. If that's where the world's going to be, we'll set them straight.

We'll do just like they do. That don't set anything straight. That just joins the fray. Let me be clear about something. Just because you think it does not mean you need to say it.

It does not mean that you need to type it. It is best not to show all your inner feelings on social media.

You're to love people that you don't agree with. You're to love people that you're not very happy with.

He goes as far as telling us to love folks that we'd rather not even tend to. We're to love folks like the Lord has loved us.

[14:20] And man, I'm telling you, the Lord has looked past a lot in our lives, hasn't He? He's loved us enough to forgive us of those things. He's loved us enough to die for those things.

And in return, we share that same kind of love for each other. If you've asked Him to forgive you, He's forgiven you. And He loves you so much that even in our mess, He died for us.

And now He just tells us to respond by loving others. There's a fruit of compassion there. There's also a fruit of our conduct. How we are to act. Romans 6, verse 22 says this, But now that you've been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end eternal life.

Now when Scripture speaks of sanctification, it's speaking of becoming more like Christ throughout our lives. It means that we are made holy.

That means we're set apart by and for God. Does not mean we're perfect. We're not. It does mean that we're set apart for Him.

[15:29] And our salvation will be consummated in eternity when we are made more like Him. That's our glorification. But in the meantime, we are to grow more like Him. I like old Swindoll's book, the title, never read the book, but I love the title.

Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back. You know? That's how we live our lives. We make some progress and then we mess up. But you know what? If you take three steps forward and two steps back, you've made a step of progress.

And the key to the Christian life is making progress toward being more like Christ. 1 Peter makes it very clear. He says in 1 Peter 1, verse 14, As obedient children, do not conform to the passions of your former ignorance.

But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in your conduct. Since it's written, you shall be holy for I am holy.

In order for us to do and to be what God has set out for us to be, we have to pursue holiness. Between the 6 a.m. crowd and the 9 a.m. crowd is about 40 men reading through *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges.

[16:43] It is a challenge to each one of us. And we are challenged by that and we encourage each other through that. And Jerry in that work says this. He says, But God has not called us to be like those around us.

He's called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God. Not about being a little bit better than the guy next to you.

It's about being like the Lord. So to pursue holiness involves at least two things. One, it involves our diligence and our effort. And that is required to be pursuing holiness.

And we are to be pursuing it. And I will tell you too, it's a lifelong task. You will never finish it. You will spend the rest of your life, Christian, serving the Lord.

Becoming more like Him. It's not a crash course. It's a long haul. We will spend our lives being more like Him. That's the kind of evidence that the fruit that Jesus told us to bear because He's the vine and we're the branches.

[17:54] That's the kind of fruit that we're to bear in His last teaching before He went to the cross. He also said we ought to have the fruit of our conversation. The Lord's name and His praise ought to be quick on your tongue.

Hebrews chapter 13, verse 15 says this, through Him, speaking of Christ, then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. That is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

In other words, we need to be speaking of the Lord every chance we get. It needs to be a part of our talk. James chapter 4, 13 through 15, tells us to acknowledge our dependence upon Him in the plans that we make.

He says, come now, you who say today or tomorrow will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit. Yet you don't know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we'll live and do this or that. Friend, be careful.

[19:01] Don't assume other people know. Talk of your love. Talk of your praise. Talk of your dependence upon the Lord.

The fruit of our conversations. Lastly, we ought to bear the fruit of harvest. If we live our lives of character, if we live our lives of Christian compassion, if we conduct ourselves with gospel conversations that are real and that are evident through our lives, God will use us and lead us to reach other folks.

In Romans 1, verse 13, Paul spoke of his hunger to come to them so that he could, quote, reap some harvest. Paul was hungry to reach people for Christ.

And your hunger to see people saved is a sure sign of your faithfulness to live for the Lord. It's a sure sign of your faithfulness to pray for the lost.

Lift them up. Ask God to move in their lives. Ask God to move in your life. Ask God to somehow allow you to be a part of that process to see them come to know the Lord personally.

[20:36] Proverbs 11, verse 30 says, the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. And I love the way King James put it. It says, and he that winneth souls is wise.

I believe the greatest investment of your time can be made sharing Jesus with somebody else. there's an ancient fable that tells the story of three merchants crossing the Arabian desert. They were traveling on a starless night in order to avoid the heat and they passed over a dry creek bed. In the midst of that, they heard a voice from the night, not knowing where it came from, commanding them to stop. They were ordered to stoop down and to pick up the pebbles from that dry creek bed and to put them in their pocket and then to leave and to camp nowhere near that location.

The voice then told them that in the morning they would be both happy and sad. They did what they were told. They picked up the pebbles, they put them in their pockets, they went on their way and

the next morning when they woke up far away from that dry creek bed they reached in their pocket and anxiously looked and rather than finding pebbles in their pocket they found precious jewels. [22 : 17] And just like that voice had told them they were both happy and sad. they were happy that they had jewels. They were sad that they left a lot of others behind.

My friend if you ever lead anybody to the Lord Jesus you'll find it's the most satisfying thing in your life that you'll ever do.

When somebody genuinely surrenders their life to the Lord and God allows you to be a part of that closing process it's a blessing.

I don't believe the half has been told though because I believe that if you will pray for folks to come to know the Lord that you'll be a part of that process.

I believe that if you'll share and you'll invite and you'll be anxious ready to share your love for the Lord Jesus with somebody else God will allow you to be part of that process.

[23 : 32] God has a way of capturing somebody through several different means of contact along the way and if you happen to be at the end of that when they give their heart and life to the Lord Jesus he just blesses you that much more because you happen to be a part of that but you didn't do that God did that and he did it through a lot of other people working and moving all the time in their life the jewels of heaven has to be the souls that we touch and how some of them are we see change in their life and I am convinced when we get to eternity we'll see folks that we didn't know they ever came to the Lord but if we had a testimony for the Lord and we lived it out before them and we shared with them we know that somewhere along the way we played a part in that process but we didn't know the end result till we saw them face to face it'll make you both happy and sad happy for all those that's been reached and sad for those that you didn't share with if it meant enough to Christ in the upper room to be the focal passage

I mean we're talking John 13 through 17 and right smack in the middle at John 15 5 he says I'm the vine and you're the branches without me you can do nothing but in me you'll bear fruit they got up from there just minutes later and went to the garden where he'd be arrested he knew what was coming he knew what to share it was important to him then it's important to us now let's make sure that our branches are healthy enough with our character healthy enough with our compassion healthy enough with our conduct with our conversation with our contentment to bear fruit fruit that is fit to reach others for Christ because if that's the burden of Christ in the upper room in his last sit down with his disciples before he went to the cross if that's such a priority to him it ought to be to us and just quite honestly there is never a better time than as we approach

Easter what an open door of opportunity to welcome to invite to begin a conversation with somebody about the difference that Jesus has made in your life may God help us to be fruit bearing Christians may he bless that path with every head bowed and every eye closed it's a challenge folks it's a challenge and I asked you last week to pray that God would give you names and lay them upon your heart and I asked you this week to spend time praying for those names asking God to work in their lives asking God to work in your life asking God to work out just a way for you to invite we'll make that process just as easy as possible for you with invitation cards that tell all the details if you're shy and don't say much hand them a card man I'd love for you to come to this but you know there's folks around you that desperately need Jesus and if you prayed for those folks God's laid folks on your heart some of you have been like me your card's too full it ain't big enough as God lays burdens upon your heart let's be diligent let's go and see what God has in store for us and then come and see what he does in our midst if you're here this morning and you've never accepted the Lord Jesus Christ I want you to know that if you feel him drawing you this morning if you feel a burden to ask God to forgive you of your sins and to come into your life and to change you I promise you today he'll save you today's day of salvation he'll work and move in your life as only he can you don't need to clean up to come to him he'll clean you up he'll make you right you surrender your life to him give it over to him maybe you're here this morning and you've done that but you've never acknowledged that publicly and you need to do that it's not a private decision everything Christ ever did said it was public he'd just look at folks and say come follow me and they'd come on or they'd decide not to come on so I encourage you to make a decision to follow him today maybe God's drawing you to be a part of this fellowship you know that

God's leading you to be a part of this church join us along the journey help us do what God has called us to do or maybe you just need to get your heart right today to just come to this altar or have a pastor pray for you to ask God to do a work in your life I don't know what God's telling you to do

but I know you'll never be satisfied unless you follow him so let's be obedient today heavenly father lead and work in our midst right now oh God I pray have your will and your way in our hearts in Jesus precious name amen