

## **PURPOSEFUL SPEECH: Two Statements and Two Questions (John 16:1-33)**

Have you ever come across someone who had the gift of gab? This would be a person who talks a lot, but oddly, he or she never seems to actually say anything.

I heard a comedian tell how that after being married to his wife for 20+ years, he had developed a filter which enabled him to tune her out but still catch the things she wanted him to do. He described how she would be going on and on, and then he would latch on to the phrase “go to the store.” She would continue to speak voluminously, and his filter helped him to hear the words “need milk.” She kept on speaking on, and he caught “stop at gas station,” and “fill up the car.” When she finally came to a stop, he replied, “I would be glad to go to the store and pick up some milk. On the way back, I’ll stop at the gas station and fill up the car.”

Hearing that, his wife said, “Thank you for listening.”

Men, here’s a warning: If you try to use your filter and it’s not working properly, you could find yourself in real trouble, really quickly.

It is important that husbands and wives truly listen to one another, but it is also important that when we speak, we speak with purpose.

When you get behind the wheel of a car, you don’t drive just to drive. No. With gasoline over \$3 a gallon, you have a destination in mind when you stick that key in the ignition and turn it or when you hit that start button for those of you who have a newer car. When you drive somewhere, you go there on purpose.

Likewise, with our words, we endeavor to take our listener somewhere. It may not be somewhere that he wants to go, but it will be either somewhere he needs to go or somewhere you need him or her to go. Just as we drive with purpose, we are to speak with purpose.

When I was in both college and seminary, I had some professors who were excellent lecturers. They knew their subject matter. They had spent considerable time preparing their lectures. As they spoke, I would take notes the entire class period. I might have four or five pages of good stuff.

Then, I had other professors. They knew their stuff, too. Maybe they had even written a book on their area of expertise, but they had long quit preparing lectures. The entire class period, they might tell stories they had told before many times. Students quickly learned they could easily get the professor to chase rabbits. At the end of class, I would look at my notebook for that class. I might have been able to get one sentence of notes or none at all. The professor was not speaking on purpose; he was just talking.

Jesus was a Master Teacher. Everything He said was important, but He also had a way of highlighting things He didn’t want His students to miss. He would say things like: “Truly, truly, I say to you . . .” or “He who was ears to hear, let him hear.” He was saying, “Get this. Put a star by it or an asterisk. This is important.”

Our text is John 16, and in this chapter, Jesus repeatedly said, “I said these things to you . . .” and then He would reveal the purpose for which He said what He had said. Jesus exercised purposeful speech. We are going to examine His purposeful speech in this

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chapter. As we do so, I am going to make two statements and ask two questions.

### **Statement #1: Jesus Spoke on Purpose.**

Look at John 16:1 & 4. I usually like reading from the ESV. I think it is a reliable and trustworthy translation. It is one of the best ones available. But that said, I don't like the way the editors of that translation handled v. 1. When we hear the words "fall away," we immediately think in terms of someone losing his or her salvation. Instead of "keep you from falling away,"

- The KJV uses "that ye should not be offended."
- The NASB puts it, "be kept from stumbling."
- In his translation, Phillips has it, "may not be shaken."
- N.T. Wright rendered it, "stop you from being tripped up."

The central Greek word in v. 1 gives us the English word *scandal* or in this instance *scandalize*. The noun form is often translated as *stumbling-block*. I believe there is a significant difference between stumbling and falling away. There is even a difference between falling down and falling away.

When a religious leader sins in a public way, those who were following him, are offended by his actions. His bad behavior can sow doubt in their heart and make them even question the reality of what they have been taught.

Verse 4 sheds light on the meaning of v. 1. What Jesus is saying is this, "Listen, guys, tough times are coming. I don't want you to be surprised by what you are going to face. I have said what I have said to prepare you for what you are going to experience."

When a person becomes a new believer, he or she may mistakenly think, "Now that I am a Christian, everything is going to be wonderful. All my problems will be solved." You know that is not true, but they don't know that. So, when the tough times come, when the sea gets rough and stormy, they may think, "Hey, what's going on here? This isn't the way it is supposed to be." They are in danger of being tripped up.

William Hendriksen explains it this way:

In order to prevent such grievous disappointment which would tend to undermine their faith, the Lord told them all these things ahead of their occurrence. Thus, they will know that not only the treachery of Judas, and the departure of Jesus, but also the hatred of the world was included in God's plan for their own progress in salvation.

From this we see . . .

#### *1. Jesus Spoke on Purpose to Prepare Us.*

Have you ever experienced something that you really weren't quite prepared to experience?

My daughter Bethany was my first child. After we brought her home from the

hospital, I looked at her mother. She looked at me. We both were thinking, “Now what? Why did the hospital let us bring her home?” Her mother was the baby of her family. I was the baby of my family. What did we know about taking care of a baby?” We felt rather unprepared.

Thankfully, God was good to us. She turned out quite well, I must say. Now, she is preparing to be a mother. I think she will be more far more prepared than we were.

Let me ask you: Looking back . . .

- Were you really prepared to be on your own when you left home?
- Were you prepared to be a husband or a wife when you said, “I do”?
- Were you prepared for the rigors of discipleship when you said, “I am yours, Lord; I surrender to you”?

Quite likely, you weren’t. I wasn’t. I was 8-years-old when I trusted Christ. What does an 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grader know about the implications of being a Christ-follower? Don’t misunderstand me. I was old enough to be saved, but I wasn’t old enough to understand it all. To be saved, we don’t have to understand it all; we just have to be old enough to believe. I’ve said before, the Bible doesn’t call upon children to have the faith of adults; it calls adults to have the faith of children.

To be prepared for living for Christ through persecution and opposition, we must listen to what Jesus said and pay attention to what Jesus did.

We see that Jesus spoke on purpose to prepare us, also . . .

## 2. *Jesus Spoke on Purpose to Instill Peace.*

Look at v. 33. When Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you,” to what things was He referring? It was the things He had told them that night? And what things had He told them? Among other things, Jesus told them:

- One of you will betray Me.
- Peter, you will deny Me.
- All of you will desert Me.
- I will be “lifted up,” (a nice way of saying *crucified*).
- I will leave you, and you won’t be able to follow.

Does that sound like things that would give them peace? Think about it. When those things did happen, that would know that Jesus knows all things, that Jesus can be trusted, and that if those things happened, they could trust the other things Jesus said.

That night, Jesus also said:

- I am preparing a place for you in My Father’s house, and I’m coming back for you.
- I am sending the Holy Spirit to you. He will be your Helper and your Teacher.
- You won’t be alone. You won’t be an orphan.
- Ask what you want, and I will answer your prayer.

- Abide in Me, and you will bear much fruit.
- Your sorrow will be turned to joy.

When the things they didn't want to happen happened, and when they happened just as Jesus said they would, those disciples would be able to believe the good things would happen just as Jesus promised. And their faith in what Jesus said would give them great peace.

Notice the contrast Jesus makes between being in Him and being in the world. If we are in Him, we have peace. If we are in the world, we have tribulation.

When a new business is looking for a place to set up shop, whether it is a retail store, or a restaurant, or whatever, they are told to look for three things: location, location, location.

Likewise, in life, location matters. The world will give you nothing but frustration. Jesus will give you peace. What you get depends on where you are. Friend, where are you?

The truth is that Christians are both in the world and in Christ. The Bible teaches that believers are in the world but not of the world. Because we live in this world, we are subject to the common frustrations of this life. That means that although we experience frustrations, at our core, we have peace because we are in Christ.

For this person who is not in Christ, who is not a believer, he or she has frustration but no peace. Come to Christ. Let Him give you peace.

Hendriksen called peace the greatest of all blessings. "The greatest," he said. Think about it. The world tells you that you must have money and lots of it. Friend, peace is far greater than mere money, even if that money is counted in millions.

- Money can be stolen.
- Money can be foolishly invested and lost.
- Money is eaten up by inflation.
- Money causes worry. "Is it enough? Who is trying to take it? How do I use it? Where do I put it?"

But peace! You don't have to hold on to it. Peace holds on to you. Money worries will keep you up at night, but peace will help you sleep like a baby.

So far, we have learned that Jesus spoke on purpose. He spoke on purpose to prepare us, and He spoke on purpose to instill peace. Let's move on to Statement #2.

## **Statement #2: The Holy Spirit Speaks on Purpose.**

In this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, we see that the Holy Spirit speaks on purpose to the world, and He speaks on purpose to the believer. Consider . . .

### *1. The Holy Spirit Speaks on Purpose to the World.*

Look at vv. 7-11. Jesus' departure from this world would bring triumph not tragedy because when He left, the Spirit would come. I will not try to say everything that could

be said about this passage. I just want to emphasize that because the Spirit comes into this world, He will have an effect upon the world. Since the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, He will call out falsehood when He sees it. He will expose guilt and call for repentance.

He does so in three areas—sin, righteousness, and also judgment. The great sin that is behind every other sin is the sin of unbelief. If Jesus is as great as the Bible claims He is, then rejection of Jesus is the greatest sin. The world does not believe in Jesus and does not want to believe in Jesus. They avoid the people in whom the Spirit works—believers, and the places at which the Spirit most often works—churches, camps, religious meetings of all kinds. In fact, those people and places becomes targets of those who refuse to believe in Jesus. The unsaved person does not want to be reminded of his sin of unbelief.

The Spirit also convicts the world of unrighteousness. I never understood the connection between that thought and the next thought, “Because I go to the Father and you see Me no longer.” What do those two have to do with one another.

Think about it this way. Who sought to put Jesus to death? It was the Jewish leaders. They thought of themselves as being righteous and Jesus as being wicked. But if Jesus went to the Father, that means they were wrong, and He was right. He was righteous, and they were not.

Many in the world have overestimated their own goodness and righteousness, but the Holy Spirit has a way of showing us we are not as good as we think we are.

As the Spirit speaks with purpose to the world, a third thing He does is to convict of judgment. The world stands with the Devil, but the Devil has been judged, and that means those who align themselves with him are in trouble.

Jesus did not come preaching, “I’m OK; you’re OK.” No. He preached repentance, and He warned that judgment would come to those who did not repent. The favorite verse of many is John 3:16. Two verses later, in John 3:18, Jesus said, “Whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” Then, in v. 19, Jesus added, “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.”

The Spirit of God speaks on purpose to the world. Next, Jesus shows us . . .

## 2. *The Holy Spirit Speaks on Purpose to Christians.*

Look with me at John 16:12-15. In these verses, the word *speaks* is found twice, and word *declare* is used three times. Jesus is talking to His disciples, and He uses the word *you* five times. Today, we are the disciples. We are the *you*. The Spirit speaks to us, and He does so on purpose. The Spirit doesn’t engage in small talk. He doesn’t chit chat. He declares to us what God has told Him to say.

One of the most important functions of the Spirit in the life of the believer is found in v. 13. Jesus promises the Spirit will guide us into all the truth. He will not drive us; He will guide us. After all, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of our Great Shepherd. He will cause us to lie down in green pastures, lead us beside still waters, restore our souls, and lead us into paths of righteousness.

Have you ever been on a vacation or an outing of some kind with a tour guide? The tour guide can show you points of interest. He can explain the significance of a place and

the things of importance that happened at that place. He gives you context. He provides understanding.

The Holy Spirit is our tour guide of truth, and the tour guide of the truth found in Scripture. Those who men who wrote what we call Scripture or the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit. And this Book is called the Sword of the Spirit. If you need help understanding it, ask Him. That is a prayer He will gladly answer.

We have covered two statements that are drawn from the text. We have dealt with Jesus and the Holy Spirit speaking on purpose. Now, I want to go beyond the text. I am going to go from preaching to meddling. I want to ask two questions. Admittedly, these two questions are not found clearly within today's passage, but I believe they are questions with which we need to wrestle.

### **Question #1: Do We Speak to God on Purpose?**

Speaking to God is what we call prayer. Are we praying to God on purpose? I am afraid that much of our praying is little more than reciting memorized phrases. Through more than 5 decades of going to church services, and prayer meetings, and Bible studies, I have known quite a few individuals who I could closely tell you what they were going to pray before they prayed because they always prayed the same things. You might say that were in a prayer rut. They weren't truly praying on purpose; they were simply repeating well-worn phrases they had memorized over the years.

I don't mean to sound judgmental because I have found myself doing that, too.

In what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned, "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them," Jesus says (Mt. 6:7-8a).

Do not keep saying the same old things in the same old way. Scripture calls upon us to sing a new song unto the Lord. I am calling upon you to pray a new prayer unto the Lord. Actually, there is a difference between praying and saying prayers. God doesn't want us to say memorized prayers. He wants us to pray. He wants us to talk to Him.

We would never talk to another person the way we often talk to God. What would my wife think if I said to her some night, "Ruth Ann, I just want to thank you for that dinner tonight, Ruth Ann. Ruth Ann, it was really special. Ruth Ann, you are so good to me, and Ruth Ann, I just want to let you know how much you mean to me."

She might think that I had consumed something other than just dinner. We don't talk to people like that; so why do we talk to God like that?

Let your communication with God be real. Let it be an honest conversation between you and Someone you love. By the way, when you have an authentic conversation, you are not the one who does all the speaking. That means we need to give God a chance to talk to us. He just might have something to say to us, and we need to hear Him. So, when you are finished praying, don't run off to do something else. Listen for what He has to say.

Let me close with . . .

## Question #2: Do We Speak for God on Purpose?

When I say speak for God, what I really mean is, do we speak to lost people on purpose? Do we give a purposeful witness to those who don't yet know Him. God wants to use us to reach our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends, even members of our family. Jesus told His disciples, "You shall be My witnesses." We are to speak on His behalf. We're to make His word and His will known to those who are far from Him.

My gut tells me we aren't doing that because my heart tells me I am not doing that. Yes, I preach the Bible to mostly saved people every Sunday and most Wednesdays, but I am not doing much to evangelize lost people.

By the way, inviting people to church, is not witnessing. Witnessing is not saying, "Hey, we've got a great preacher; I'd like for you to hear him."

Witnessing is closer to saying, "Hey, I've got a great Savior; I'd like for you to know Him. May I tell you about Him and how you can know Him, too?"

I want our church, I want you to speak to God on purpose, and I want us to speak for God on purpose.

To that end, I want to introduce a new program to our church. It is called, "The Hope Initiative." It is based on a book that is set to come off the press this week. The name of that book is *Pray and Go*. That is exactly what I want us to do. I want us to pray and go.

I would like for about 5-8 people, no more than 10, say, "I want to be part of that." That would mean you would buy the book. It costs about \$12. Once you get the book, you will read it over a period of 30 days. It is divided into daily readings. And there are some exercises for you to complete. I want us to meet as a group once a week to discuss what we are learning. There are some things we can do together. We will go prayer walking in neighborhoods around our church or around the neighborhoods in which we live. If you don't know what prayer walking is, well, you will learn through this study. We will also learn a simple way of sharing the gospel.

I will limit this first group to ten, but I want to offer it each quarter; so, you will have another chance to go through it later if you aren't part of the first group.

We have a God who speaks on purpose; so, let's be a people who speak on purpose.