

The Son has Gone Up

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if you would turn with me, please, now in your Bible to John's Gospel and chapter 13, and we will read together from verse 33 and into chapter 14 and verse 14.
- So, reading from John chapter 13 and beginning from verse 33.
- Jesus says, My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now, where I am going, you cannot come.
- And you command, I give you, love one another, as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.
- Simon Peter asked him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied, where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.
- [1 : 3 2] Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Then Jesus answered, will you really lay down your life for me?
- Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times. Do you not let your hearts be troubled? You believe in God, believe also in me.
- My Father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.
- You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life.
- No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.
- [2 : 4 6] Philip said, Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Jesus answered, don't you know me, Philip? Even after I have been among you such a long time, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.
- How can you say, show us the Father? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority.
- Rather, it is the Father living in me who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.
- Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.
- And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.
- [3 : 5 1] These are the words of Jesus and the words of the living God. And as we consider them together, let us ask for his help. Let's pray together.
- God, our Father, we praise you and we thank you for the living words of Jesus. We recognize, our Father, that he has the words of eternal life.

And so we pray now that you, by your Spirit, would help us in our hearts to be attentive to his words, to take them in, to understand what he is saying, and to put our trust in him for the first time, perhaps, or afresh this morning, that we might grow in him and grow in confidence and faith in him as he teaches us.

For we pray in his wonderful name. Amen. Well, I wonder if you remember at any point growing up, your mom or dad saying to you something like this, Mommy and daddy are going out tonight, and you be good, okay, when we're gone.

Or perhaps if you have children of your own, you've said that to them yourselves. Now, what happens next? Where are you going? Can I come? Why can't I come?

[5 : 13] Who's coming to look after us? When are you coming back? A big stream of questions, big teary eyes, a heartbreak, all because mom and dad are going out for the evening, and they cannot come to you.

We'll take that baby, that heartbreak and confusion, and stretch that, okay, and stretch that, okay, 10 or 20 or 100 times over, and we perhaps get a sense of how the disciples felt when Jesus said this to them in chapter 13, verse 33, my children, my children, I will be with you only a little longer.

You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, I tell you now, where I am going, you cannot come. Jesus is going somewhere, and they cannot come with him.

And how do the disciples react? Well, just look at these questions. Verse 36, Lord, where are you going? Verse 37, Lord, why can't I follow you now?

Chapter 14, verse 5, Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way? Verse 8, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. The confusion, the questions, the desperation, the heartbreak, because Jesus is going away, and they can't go with him yet.

[6 : 44] They are indeed his little children, aren't they? And just like the best of fathers, Jesus, from this point to the end of chapter 17 in this gospel, he tenderly and patiently is walking them through what will happen next, step by baby step, only as far as they can take it in.

So that when he does go, and they are left in the world without him physically with them, they will continue to believe in him and trust him and follow him.

And friends, that is where we are this morning too, is it not? We are here, and Jesus is not physically present with us.

But he says to us this morning, as he said to them, then, let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.

And so this morning, we are going to catch on to this truth that Jesus gives us to hold on to when our hearts are troubled and worn out by life in a world where he is not physically here.

[7 : 58] And the truth is this, that the sun has gone up. He says, I am going to the Father. And we'll see as he speaks, that is brilliant news.

The sun who came and lived and died and rose again has returned to his Father. Perhaps the day you come and you are feeling the distance.

Perhaps you are weary of life in this world. Perhaps you are worn down by its unbelief. Perhaps you feel, at times, the tug of that unbelief on your own heart.

Perhaps you wish, sometimes, if only Jesus hadn't left. If only he was here for me to see his nail-pierced hands and feet, to hear his voice, to touch him.

Perhaps this morning, you long for him to come again, to be here with us where we are. Or if you have ever prayed the prayer, come, Lord Jesus.

[9 : 08] His words here are for you. The sun has gone up. He is not here in the world. But let not your hearts be troubled, he says.

Believe in God. Believe also in me. Trust me, he tells us. And to see why we should trust him and continue to believe in him. We're going to ask the disciples questions and we're going to hear Jesus' answers.

So here's the first question then. Lord, where have you gone? Where is he? You see that in verse 36 there? Peter asks him, Lord, where are you going?

But notice, Jesus only answers that question in passing, right? If you look at verse 2, what's his answer? My father's house has many rooms.

If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? Okay, did you catch that? Jesus is answering a different question than Peter asks.

[10 : 13] The question, if you like, behind the question. Because the question that every child wants an answer to when mom and dad go away is not where, but why? Why are you going?

Why, Jesus? Have you gone? He knows, doesn't he, better than we do what we need to hear from him, what we need to know. Jesus says he's going to his father's house, but very quickly he goes on to tell us what he's going to do in the father's house.

The father's house did not have many rooms, he said. Would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? When Susie and I lived in Edinburgh, our church there was small enough that often we would have a kind of open house invitation after the service for anyone to just come and have food with us in the evening.

But for that to work, Susie had to go home quickly over tea and coffee. Everybody would talk and Susie would dash out to tidy up the hall, to put food in the oven, to get our home ready for the church to come over.

I think the most people we had in our little Edinburgh flat was 30 adults and six children. The floor was caving in, teething. And friends, that is the picture that Jesus gives us to describe what he has gone to do.

[11 : 42] I am going back, he says, to my father's house to get the place ready for you to come. Because the church is coming over, not for an evening, but for eternity.

And Jesus says he has gone to get heaven ready to have us live with him and his father forever. Just let that sink in for a minute.

That Jesus invites us to come to him and receive God's hospitality. Okay, not us getting things sorted for him.

He says he has gone to get things sorted for us to live with God. Does his grace not amaze you?

Because brothers and sisters, this is the good news. As John put it in his first letter, not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us.

[12 : 42] Not that we have tidied ourselves up for him, but that he has prepared his home for us. Not that we have done our best for God, but that he has laid on his best for us.

God's home is open to us. Not because we have done our best to get there, but because Jesus has gone ahead to prepare heaven for us to be there.

We saw him last week, didn't he? We take on the form of a servant. And he truly has become the servant of sinners. How incredibly he serves us, brothers and sisters, that the Son of God should work and serve so that we might be at home in his house.

But where is the Father's house? What are we talking about here? Well, John said back in chapter one, right now, okay, anyone who has believed in Jesus and received him has been given the right to become a child of God.

We have been adopted, born again, into God's new family in Jesus, here and now. That's true of you. Right now, if you have trusted in Jesus.

[14 : 02] But Jesus isn't speaking of a here and now spiritual kind of house. Where he's going, where he's gone, it is a real there and then place.

Notice there in verse three the promise that he gives us as God's children. He says, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Okay, there is a place that Jesus will come again to bring us. He has called it his Father's house. I don't think, okay, we're meant to imagine Balmoral Castle in the sky.

It's not that kind of house. It's a picture. God's home is heaven. And Jesus says he will come back so that we would be there with him where he is.

But, here's the twist. Okay, when Jesus comes again, the Bible tells us not that he will bring us to be with him in his home, but that he will bring his home with him to be with us.

[15 : 16] He will not take us up to heaven with him. He will come down and bring heaven down to earth. Listen to John again much later in Revelation chapter 21.

I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. God's home is called heaven. But when Jesus comes again, heaven will be here on earth.

And if your trust is in Jesus, you will live there with him one day. Jesus says he is coming back personally to see to it. And like a wonderful gift, he is gone to get it ready for you.

But soon, he will come back to give it to you when it is ready. You brothers and sisters, the best thing about heaven, I don't know what you think when you think about heaven.

I don't know what amazes you most about the thought that we will live in heaven. heaven, the best thing about heaven, our eternal home, Jesus says, is that that is where he is.

[16 : 25] That is what he says, isn't it? I will bring you to be with me where I am. That's the hope he gives us. That is what he wants. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, wants for us to be with him where he is.

And better still, if that were possible, that is where the Father lives. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us in the presence of the Father forever.

So why shouldn't we be troubled and concerned that Jesus isn't here? Well, firstly, because of where he's gone and what he has gone to do.

my Father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? Brothers and sisters, does that not thrill your heart this morning?

Does it not give us a longing to be with him where he is? Do we not love him all the more for going to get heaven ready for me and you to live? Well, if your trust is in him, your place in heaven, your place with him is settled and secured.

[17 : 42] That is what he tells us. Our second question, of course, is, that's fine, but how do we get there? How do we get there? So second question, if you see that in verse 4 there of chapter 14, Jesus says, you know the way to the place I'm going.

Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? Now, hasn't Jesus just told them where he's going? Okay, but remember, let's give these guys credit.

They are upset, they're confused about what Jesus is saying. Naturally, they're not piecing it all together. And so this isn't a silly question for Thomas to ask.

Now let me say, if you have questions questions, that you would just love to ask Jesus, especially questions when you are feeling just how hard it is to live in a broken world, full of sadness and sin and suffering, where he is not right here in body to help, that you are just like every Christian throughout history, all the way back, okay, to these very first followers of Jesus.

However long we've been Christians, we still have questions for Jesus and this shows us that we can come to him and bring those questions and ask him. He is here for us.

[19 : 09] And this is a great question to ask, isn't it? Lord, how do we get where you're going? Jesus is going to the Father. Try typing that into Google Maps.

What would happen? It's ridiculous, of course, to think that we could put that into Google Maps and get a result. But if you ask someone today, okay, the way to God, well, they might think that perhaps getting to God is a bit like that.

Google Maps tells you, doesn't it, how to get from A to B. And sometimes it will give you different route options. Okay, this route takes longer. This is the scenic route.

There's been an accident on that route. And getting from A to B involves choosing a route and driving for a long time, making different turns, maybe a few U-turns where possible, until finally you get to your destination.

Now, is that how we get to God? Are there lots of different routes or paths that might take us to Him? Is it simply a case of us picking our favorite religious or spiritual way, and following the rules, and taking the twists and turns until we eventually arrive at God where He is?

[20 : 27] How can we know the right way to God? Well, listen to what Jesus says. Here's His answer. Verse 6, Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. There are not lots of ways to God, He says. There is one way to God.

And Jesus has the audacity to say, it is me, it is Him. And again, whether you've heard this a thousand times or this is the first time you're hearing it today, we need to just give that a minute, don't we, to settle.

Who is it who can say this about themselves? You know, if you don't know Jesus, it's really easy to imagine that we can line Him up with all the great and the good of the religious world and think that they are all basically saying the same thing.

Be good enough and it will be okay in the end. But friends, that is not what Jesus said. It's just not what He said. If you listen to Jesus' words, you know that He doesn't line up alongside Buddha and Muhammad, who on earth seriously says, I am the way to God.

[21 : 50] Without me, you cannot come to God. No other person in world history has ever said that. People have said, follow these rules, go in this direction, you will get to God.

Nobody but Jesus has said, I am the way. So whether you believe in Him this morning or not, Jesus answers this question, how do I get to God?

it puts Him in a category all of His own. Jesus says the way to God is not a long journey. It is not full of twists and turns, following rules, avoiding accidents.

The way to God is to be in relationship with Him. Relationship with Him. Do you believe Him? Do you believe Him?

Even if we have been Christians a long time, we still need to hear Jesus say it, don't we? So often we feel we need to respond to Jesus like Peter does back in verse 37.

[22 : 56] Peter said, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. We might say Peter was so keen, so faithful, we could say.

He's saying, Jesus, I'll do the journey. I'll do the suffering. I'll do the dying. Really? Really? Will you?

Said Jesus, will you lay down your life for me? Jesus knew Peter wouldn't do that, that he couldn't, that we cannot. You friends, if we love Jesus, there will be a part of us that wants to come with him, right?

To get the house ready, to set the table, to rest. No, no, says the host, sit down, rest.

I go to prepare a place for you. See, coming to God is not simply following Jesus' example. It's not following his example.

[23 : 59] Last week, he gave us an example, didn't he? But Jesus did not die for our sins to give us an example. He died to become himself our way to God.

How do we get to God? Well, not by us laying down our lives for him, but because Jesus has laid down his life for us. He went to the cross. He died to take away everything that separates us from God, that distance that sat between us.

He's taken that away because he took the punishment for our sins. only because he has dealt with our sin could he ever only be the way to God.

And so friends, the way to God is not how well we live. It is not how faithful we are. The way to God is Jesus who lived and died for us.

Reflecting on this truth, there's a theologian called Thomas Sakempis. He wrote a poem that really unpacks that for us fully. I'm going to read it for us and just invite you to listen to what Jesus is saying.

[25 : 11] It says, I am the way to God. I did not come to light a path, to blaze a trail that you may simply follow in my tracks, pursue my shadow like a prize that's cheaply won.

My life reveals some of all he is and does. So how can ye, the sons of night, look on me and think of my way as just the road for you to run?

My path takes in Gethsemane, the cross, and stark rejection draped in agony. My way to God embraces utmost loss.

Your way to God is not my way, but me. Each other path is dismal swamp of fraud. I stand alone.

I am the way to God. These are some of Jesus' most famous words, aren't they? Like precious diamonds in our Bibles.

[26 : 19] But I wonder, how often do we take them out and enjoy them? Do we put these words of his away in the cabinet like a precious family heirloom and only get them out for guests and visitors to admire?

Or do we put these words on like a wedding ring and wear them day to day in our lives? Interesting, isn't it, that we turn to these verses mostly for evangelism?

But Jesus says these things to his disciples, his followers. Why? Well, because he knows how hard it is to follow him while he is not here in person.

And to soothe our heartache for a world where he is here, to see, to touch, and hear, he says to us today, you don't need to go and find your own way to get there, because you have the way if you have me.

How do we get to God only through Jesus? Now, this is a life-changing conversation, isn't it, for these guys, for us to participate in?

[27 : 31] And so it makes sense that our final question that we ask is, well, Jesus, how can we trust you? How can we trust you? That was no different for Jesus' first disciples, this final question there in verse eight.

Oh, in fact, it's more of an exasperated groan, isn't it? Philip said to the Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us. He wants to believe, but he needs the proof.

God, give me something to believe you. Perhaps that's where you are today, it's where lots of people are. It sounds good, but I'll believe it when God shows up personally to prove it.

But Jesus gives them more than they bargained for, doesn't he? Here's the answer in verse nine. Jesus said, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Jesus says, God has showed up personally and proved it. Here I am. If only I could see God, says Philip.

[28 : 37] Do you still not know me? Says Jesus. You want to see God? Whoever has seen me has seen God. Jesus, the Son of God, came from the Father to show us what God is really like.

No one has seen the Father, says John, but the only God who's at the Father's side has made him known. And so to look upon Jesus is to see the living God.

The big irony, of course, is that Philip was asking for something that no one had ever seen. Nothing seen before by human eyes. No one has seen the Father. But Jesus, he had walked and taught and done science for these three years.

Says he had come to show him who the Father really is. And Philip, after three years, still had not got that. And so how much harder then is it for us?

We, who have never seen Jesus stand on the earth. Where is God? Where is God on the days when it feels like this world is all that there is?

[29 : 47] Where is God when so many of the people we know live as if he did not exist? Where is God on the days it feels easier, perhaps, to give up following him and do my own thing instead?

Where is God? Jesus says, here I am. Jesus says, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Do you want to know what God is like?

Do you want to know where he is? Look at his son, Jesus Christ. Look at his words. Look at his works. He is set before us in plain view that we might see and believe that he is the son of God.

See, all throughout this conversation and their questions, the disciples have tried to reach their arms around Jesus, haven't they? Trying to feel what is hiding behind his back. Show us the place, Jesus.

Show us the path, Jesus. Show us God, Jesus. Give us something to cling on to. Cling on to me, says Jesus.

[30 : 56] There's no place I'm hiding. There's no path I'm hiding. There is no God I'm hiding. How often do we come to Jesus with the sense that there's more, perhaps, that he's keeping from us, more hidden behind his back?

Jesus' incredible answer here is that there is not we reach around Jesus and find only Jesus. There is no God hiding behind the back of Jesus who we have not met if we have met Jesus.

So how can we trust him? Well, how can we not? Who says the things that he says? Who does the things that he does? He is the very rest that our wandering hearts so need in a broken world.

Let not your hearts be troubled, he says. These words give us so much confidence, don't they, to go on believing in him while we wait for his return.

And he gives us so much hope for what he is still doing today. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing. And they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.

[32 : 16] Here is our hope today, friends, that because Jesus has gone to heaven, there are new opportunities, new connections, new works, greater works, because he is not here, but he is risen and seated at the Father's right hand.

There are greater things going on today than there were than when he stood on the earth. The gospel has gone to the ends of the earth. Billions have heard it and believed and been saved forever because Jesus has gone to the Father to serve us now from heaven.

And so, brothers and sisters, in this hope, we have greater works still to do, not in our own strength and power, but by believing in him, trusting him to do far more than we could ever ask or imagine, we pray for these great things in his name.

Yes, Jesus is not here, but he promises, does he not, that he has not stopped ruling, saving, teaching, caring.

In fact, he says his sphere of service has only grown bigger because he has gone to the Father. And so, he gives us every reason today to believe in him and continue to believe in him while we wait for him with eager longing to come again and bring us to be with him where he is.

[33 : 53] Let's pray now together. God, our Father, we praise you for Jesus.

We praise you for his grace to us, that we sinful people, rebels, Lord, as we are in our hearts, might come to him and be at home with you and have rest, and our troubled hearts have peace.

Father, we thank you that you have shown him to us, he who is the way and the truth and the life. Father, we ask that you would help us never to take him for granted.

Father, we thank you that he says these extraordinary things to us so that we might believe. We thank you that he knows that we are dust and our hearts are weak and we are tempted on every side.

Father, by your spirit we pray, help us to have confidence in Jesus, to root ourselves in him and that in him we would grow. For we ask in his name.

[35 : 04] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.