

PDF version of the lesson notes.

I. Background Issues

- Today's lesson (John 16–17) picks up where last week's lesson (John 13–15) left off. Of course, we didn't cover any of the John material so let me outline the relation between John 13–15 and John 16–17. The material from John 13–17 may be best thought of as one continuous discourse or a series of connected discourses that revolve around the last supper and Jesus' farewell to his disciples.
- Actually, I find it difficult to split up these chapters into discrete units. Dividing the material comprising chapters 15 and 16 strikes me as particularly difficult (although that is exactly what the lesson 23 and 24 split does). However, I think an outline is useful even though we could potentially split it other ways. Let's tentatively divide these chapters in the following way:[1]

13:1–13:20	Jesus' washes the disciples feet
13:21–13:30	Jesus' predicts his betrayal
13:31–14:31	Farewell to the disciples and discourse about the return to the Father
15:1–16:4	A discourse to the disciples about remaining faithful in the face of external hostility
16:4–16:33	Jesus consoles his sorrowful disciples
17:1–17:26	Jesus prays for the disciples

II. Straddling the Divide

- Read John 16:1–4
 - (1) These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.
 - (2) They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. (3) And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. (4) But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.
- *In verse 1, what "things" or part of the discourse is Jesus referring to when he says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended?" Can you pinpoint it to a particular part of chapter 15?*

- *Given that persecution is mentioned in verse 2, do you think Jesus is referring to what he said 15:18–27 since it specifically deals with persecution? Do you think the reference is to a larger part of the text and includes "things" like the parable of the true vine?*
- *Do you think it is strange that Jesus is worried that the disciples will be offended by the persecution?*
- *The NET Bible points out that the verse could be more literally translated as, "I have told you all these things so that you will not be caused to stumble." In the NIV, a modern translation, the verse is, "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray." Also, the Greek may have a notion of being "scandalized." [2] *Does this help you or change how you understand this pericope? Could persecution cause the disciples to be scandalized? Why?**
- *If Jesus is referencing his prediction of coming trials and persecution then how does such information help the disciples so that they will not go astray or be "scandalized?" Why would it be important for the disciples to know that persecution is coming? Is there any part of 15:18–27 that you think would have given strength to the disciples?*
- *Do you think verse 15:18 is helpful in terms of not falling away or being scandalized in the face of persecution for not only the disciples but maybe us as well?*

(18) If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

(19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Or do you see other parts of the John 15:18–27 verses as more germane?

- *What is the motivation of the persecutors? Are you surprised by their motivation? Why are the persecutors motives relevant? Does their motivation give us a hint at why it was so vital for Jesus to mention and discuss the forthcoming persecution?*

III. The Paraclete

- Read John 16:4–11:

(4) But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. (5) But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? (6) But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. (7) Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (8) And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because

they believe not on me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

- I must admit that I am a bit puzzled by verse 5. Jesus says, "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?" this seems strange to me because in an earlier part of this last supper discourse Peter asks Jesus the following:

(36) Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. (37) Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. -- John 13:36–37

Any ideas about how to explain verse 5 in light of John 13:36? Are verses 6–7 useful in terms of understanding verse 5 in light of John 13:16? I guess I am wondering if this question is meant to refocus the disciples away from their sorrow? Is it better explained as some sort of mistake in the record or tradition regarding the Last Supper discourse?

- It seems like there are many possible ways to understand verse 5 in light of possible or apparent contradiction with John 13:36. However, I think Jesus might be pointing out that the disciples are focusing on the wrong things given their knowledge. The fact the disciples are sorrowful over Jesus leaving suggests that they do not understand or know where Jesus is going because if they really understand where Jesus is going they would understand that they shouldn't be sorrowful. They are acting as if they didn't know the answer to the question and Jesus is pointing out the contradiction between their actions and their knowledge. *What do you think about this explanation? Do other explanations make more sense?*
- In verse 7 of the King James Version we find the phrase, "[i]t is expedient for you that I go away." In the NRSV, a modern translation, this same phrase is translated as "it is to your advantage that I go away." Also, the footnote for verse 7 in the LDS edition of the King James Bible also suggests "beneficial, profitable, and advantageous" as alternative translation of the Greek text. *What do you think of the idea that it is not only necessary but advantageous for the disciples that Jesus goes away because of the coming of the Comforter?*
- In verse 7 it mentions the coming of the the Holy Ghost using the title of "Comforter." If you examine modern translations, you are more likely to see them translate the underlying Greek as "Advocate", "Counselor", "Helper" or even "Paraclete" (the Greek word is paraklhto). I don't want to argue that the title Comforter isn't a legitimate title for the Holy Ghost. *But do you think it is the best title in this context? Does a title like "Advocate" or "Counselor" make more sense in this context? Why?*
- I think "Advocate" works better in these context than "Comforter." The actions and role described in verses 8–10 do not seem to fit how we use the word "Comforter" in the 21st century. There is almost a court vibe or legal judgment scene vibe to verses 8–10. *Why*

would there be such difference across translations on this issue?

No single English word has exactly the same range of meaning as the Greek word. "Comforter," used by some of the older English versions, appears to be as old as Wycliffe. But today it suggests a quilt or a sympathetic mourner at a funeral. "Counselor" is adequate, but too broad, in contexts like "marriage counselor" or "camp counselor." "Helper" or "Assistant" could also be used, but could suggest a subordinate rank. "Advocate" ... has more forensic overtones than the Greek word does, although in John 16:5–11 a forensic context is certainly present.[3]

George R. Beasley–Murray further explains the use of "Paraclete" in its ancient Greek context:

In secular Greek it was used especially of one called to help another in court, but it never became a technical term (unlike the Latin *advocatus*, meaning a professional legal advisor and representative).[4]

- *Why trial language? Do you think trial language is used on purpose? Is it meant to foreshadow or contrast with the coming trial of Jesus?*
- *Are you surprised by verses 8–11? Are you surprised that the Holy Ghost is linked with reproving or condemning?*

IV. The Paraclete and Truth

- Read 16:12–15:

(12) I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. (13) Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (14) He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (15) All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

- What connects this pericope with verse 5–12? Is Jesus just mentioning different roles of the Holy Ghost? Do you think the theme of consoling the disciples is one of the connecting themes between these two pericopes?
- Verse 12 indicates that, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." *Why can't the disciple "bear them now?" Is it because they are sorrowful over the impending death of the Savior? Is this another indication that the disciples aren't in the right state of mind relative to the coming events? Is it because they cannot learn these things without the "Spirit of Truth?"*

- *What is meant by "truth" in these verses? How is the word, truth, used in the gospel of John? How is the word, truth, used in John 8? Do you think John 3:20–21 is a helpful backdrop?*

(20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (21) But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

V. A Woman in Labor

- Read John 16:16–24:

(16) A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. (17) Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? (18) They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. (19) Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? (20) Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. (21) A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. (22) And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. (23) And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. (24) Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

- **Seeing and not seeing.** I am struck by the repeated image particularly in this section but extending throughout the chapter of sight or "seeing." In verse 10, we are told we will see Jesus no more. In verse 16 Jesus says, "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me." Also, notice the repetition of this in verses 17 and 18. Finally in verse 22 Jesus says, "I will see you again." *Why is the word "see" used so repeatedly? Why is seeing important in this pericope?*
- *How is "seeing" and "not seeing" been an important image or theme elsewhere in the gospel of John? Can you think of some specific examples?*
- *Why do you think the disciples are confused over the "little while" language? What does the "little while and little while" refer to?*

- *What do you think of the metaphor of a woman in labor? Does it fit the situation?*
- *Does it seem like the verses at the end of the pericope (22–25) fit better in a second coming context? The promise of joy and the promise that whatever the Father asks will be given you? Does the labor metaphor make more sense in a second coming context? How do we reconcile that with the little while and little while language at the beginning of the pericope? Could the metaphor and the ending verse apply to events that will come shortly? Why?*

VI. Confusion

- Read John 16:25–33:

(25) These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. (26) At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: (27) For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. (28) I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. (29) His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. (30) Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. (31) Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? (32) Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. (33) These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

- *The disciples in verse 29 believe that the time to speak plainly has now come. Are they right? What does the response by the Savior mean? What is he pointing out?*
- *What is meant by "speaking plainly of the father?" Does this mean that proverbs or metaphors obscure the Father in some sense?*
- *When will the time of plain speaking come?*
- *Jesus says he spoke these words to bring peace. Does that seem like a strange contrast given the disciples confusion throughout this chapter? How can these words help the disciples and us to be at peace?*
- *Jesus also tells the disciples to "be of good cheer." How can these chapters and sayings help us to be of good cheer?*

Endnotes

1. Adapted from Brown, Raymond E. (editor), Joseph A. Fitzmyer (editor), and Roland E. Murphy (editor), 1990, *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, Prentice Hall, 972. However, it looks like the original source is Schnackenburg.
2. Brown, Raymond E. (editor), Joseph A. Fitzmyer (editor), and Roland E. Murphy (editor), 1990, *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, Prentice Hall, 976.
3. NET Bible footnotes for John 14:16.
4. Beasley–Murray, George R., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, Word Books, 256.