

“Farewell Is Never Forever”

John 16:16-24

Sunday, May 17, 2015

Well, the time has come . . . a time that I certainly didn't see happening . . . not now . . . as this was NOT part of MY PLAN.

But God has been wrestling with me that this is the right decision for this Church at this time . . . and I have learned to trust when God calls me to a Church ~AND~ equally so . . . I must trust when God calls me out.

And, I think when one comes to an end of their time with those that have been entrusted into their care . . . and has an opportunity to look back and reflect upon what it is that they've hoped to impart with them. . .

And of ALL the things that I have hoped to impart with you . . . if I had to condense it down to just ONE THING . . . it's this . . . the incredible potential of Christ Jesus that is in each of us.

And the unlimited potential of learning about who and what He wants to BE . . . in . . . and through . . . each of us.

Of ALL the things you've heard from me . . . it is my prayer that you've heard that God did NOT send His one and only Son to JUST DIE for the forgiveness of our SIN . . . or that Jesus isn't some esoteric entity that exists OUTSIDE us and helps us when we call out to Him . . .

Rather, it is my prayer that you have heard me speak about God's PLAN to impart . . . to BIRTH His Son . . . into (*to use the Apostle Paul's words*) **“earthen vessels”** . . . to put God's incorruptible seed of Life (Christ Jesus) into ALL who have accepted Jesus.

And that our time together has been about REMINDING us of this TRUTH, and ENCOURAGING us all to make the conscious CHOICE of ALLOWING that Life, the life of Christ to live IN US . . . THROUGH US . . . in our own unique “earthen vessels.”

That you’ve heard me say that I BELIEVE that the Church is the compilation of all those unique “earthen vessels” expressing the nature and character of Christ wherever they are. <p>

Certainly, this explains Jesus’ cryptic words in John 16:7 in that Upper Room on His last night with His beloved: *“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.”*

Why would it be “EXPEDIENT” for Jesus of Nazareth to “GO AWAY”?

Because He could only be in one place . . . at a moment of time while He was on the face of this earth . . . BUT NOW . . . He is manifested in, and through us, wherever we are!

Jesus KNEW that the plan of God was for Him to NOT remain with His beloved in the physical sense.

And so, on that night long ago, around a Table that we gather around each and every Sunday, He shared Himself with them.

Reminding them of another who would come to teach them . . . more about the Oneness He desires to have with all creation. <p>

But that doesn’t mean we won’t have any sorrow in the parting of those we love.

Even Jesus knew that his departing announcement would bring sorrow to their life, as He said: ***"You have sorrow now,"***

But isn't the expression of sorrow at a beloved's "Farewell" just another way of saying: ***"I love you" ?***

So too, I'm grateful to God, that in the Ministry to which I have been called here at Koenig Lane Christian church . . . that Mara and I have heard those words.

Because, when it gets right down to it . . . it is Love that causes a person to be missed . . . it's Love that causes one to be filled with sorrow at a time of departure. <p>

No doubt, this is what made that ***"Last Supper"*** long ago, a sorrowful occasion . . . as they had love for one another . . .

How else can you explain people who had left EVERYTHING to follow Him . . . AND, as we remember Jesus' words, ***"greater love has no one . . . than he lay down his life for another."***

And the greater love ~ the greater one is missed. <p>

Love is that wonderful thing that draws us together and cements relationships . . . and love isn't content until there's **oneness** with the beloved.

It's Love that can't stand separation ~ as Love is the spiritual magnet that never ceases to draw us together.

That's why these men . . . and anyone, for that matter, has "SORROW" . . . as separation can cause tears . . . it's sorrowful that we must part . . .

Even Jesus had tears when his friend, Lazarus, died. **John 11:5** reminds us that ***“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus . . .”***

And then John’s Gospel carries the shortest verse of the Bible . . . (John 11:35) the one that we all wanted for our ***“scripture memory verse at VBS”*** . . . that when Jesus stood with Mary and Martha outside Lazarus' grave, it simply says: ***“Jesus wept.”*** <p>

Love causes us to grow close to each other ~ We become attached . . .

We laugh together ~

We enjoy blessed times together ~

We enjoy life together ~

We challenge each other ~

We fight battles together ~

We go through crisis’ together ~

And it brings sorrow when that dynamic changes. <p>

Certainly this was the case as Jesus and His Disciples gathered to celebrate the Passover Meal for their Last Supper together . . . ***“So you have sorrow now,” ~ “Very Truly I tell you, you will weep & mourn,”*** Jesus said.

For three years they lived, walked, ate, drank, slept, and worked together . . . they were a cohesive band.

What would they do . . . what could they be . . . what would happen to them if He did, in fact, leave them? <p>

“Parting is such sweet sorrow” is a phrase we’re all familiar with . . . because we’re all aware of the sorrow that parting can bring because that is the effect that LOVE has on us . . . if we didn’t LOVE we wouldn’t care when someone leaves us . . .

BUT . . . you remember what I said comes after the word “BUT” in a sentence, don’t you?

Sure you do . . . it’s the TRUTH that always comes after a BUT in a sentence.

And that’s the power of the TRUTH in the words Jesus uses after the word **BUT** . . . with His Disciples in this passage.

Because He reminds us ALL that ***farewell is NEVER forever*** . . . as He tells the Disciples in verse 22 of John 16, ***“So you have pain now; BUT I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and NO ONE will take your joy from you.”***

And that’s the truth for all who are in-Christ Jesus . . .

If there’s no prospect of seeing each other ~ or Christ again ~ the situation is sorrowful ~ painful . . . **BUT** it’s because of Christ, that our parting is never . . . ever . . . forever.

And Jesus knew that ~ in that Upper Room . . . as He promised they would see each other again . . . and that their tears & their pain would turn to joy . . . because He would come back to be with them forever . . . ***“for lo, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*** Matt. 28:20

AND HE IS WITH US . . . living in us . . . through us . . . uniquely as God created our “earthen vessels” . . . and it is the work of the Church to, **COLECTIVELY**, make Him manifest through us to the World.

And it’s also because of this . . . that, we too, know that we don’t have to be full of sorrow when we part with fellow Christians.

Even prior to the death of a loved one who’s in-Christ, we can honestly say, ***“I’ll see you again.”***

That is one of the many beautiful things about our faith . . . that a Christian never has to say **“Goodbye”** in the **final sense** . . . that we can always say, in ~and through~ the faith of Christ Jesus, ***“I’ll see you later.”***

And it is because of this TRUTH, ~ that we **KNOW** that our parting never needs to stay sorrowful or mournful. <p>

But, before that great day of rejoicing when we “Graduate” from this temporal real of existence . . . we must remember THE WHY we are here in the first place.

Because, it is in this GREAT PROMISE that has been bestowed upon us . . . that we realize that **“IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT US.”**

Because being a Christian, being in-Christ Jesus, has NEVER meant that we now have a sense of ENTITLEMENT . . . RATHER . . . it should ALWAYS instill in us a sense of URGENCY!

Because it’s in this great revelation and calling in Christ Jesus that we, as Christians, must also have a greater sense of urgency in

making sure that ALL are given the opportunity to join us in the Joy of our Lord . . . and to celebrate with us in that great reunion.
<PP>

No doubt, we will miss you . . . and we will continue to keep you in our thoughts and prayers . . .

But of all the things I hope you've heard from me . . . it's that I hope you've come to a different understand of who and what Jesus is and wants to be in you . . . which is who He is . . . the Lord of ALL.

That He came not only to die for us . . . but MUCH MORE IMPORTANTLY to LIVE for us . . . through us . . . uniquely as God created us.

No one in the New Testament lifts that up more than the Apostle Paul, which, by now I hope you know, is why I've given you a fairly steady diet of Paul.

And I want to encourage you to continue to search his great letters to the Church of over 2,000 years ago . . . because I believe that this is the message that God is STILL trying to convey to the Church today . . . which is . . . Yes, I sent my Son to die for your sins . . . BUT I also want you to realize that I sent Him back to Live for you, in you, as you.

And, just like Jesus' followers gathering in that Upper Room that night long ago . . . there is a sense of sorrow, searching, wondering what the future holds.

But it is precisely in these places that Jesus would want to remind us that although we aren't sure of what the future holds for any of us . . . we can be sure of the One who holds us into that future.

And all we have to be about in the “meantime” is to allow Christ to BE in us . . . who He is . . . the Lord of ALL . . . and everything else will take care of itself.

That our number ONE priority should always be about reaching out to others the universal LOVE of Christ Jesus.

Because of all the things I’m certain about . . . it’s that Churches that don’t look beyond themselves . . . will never receive the blessed anointing of God.

However, if a Church’s greatest passion and desire, is to reach out to the lost and lonely . . . to the tired and down-trodden . . . to all those who do not KNOW what we, as Christians, KNOW . . . which is the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life . . . The TRUE VINE of Christ Jesus . . .

If any Church’s major emphasis is not about fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment . . . it will never fully realize their potential of Christ in them.

Therefore, we will continue to hold KLCC in our prayers for the fulfillment of Christ’s great Commission & Commandment. <p>

And so, on this last time to be with you . . . I want you to know how thankful I am to have the support of my wife . . . I know I could not have done this without Mara.

She has been my constant supporter and encourager and the Church owes her a great debt of gratitude. <P>

I want you to know how thankful I am to a Church that gave me a chance to share and embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ ~ to share & embrace this vision of Ministry.

I'm thankful to a Church that has shared with, embraced and encouraged both, Mara & I, in Ministry.

I'm thankful to a Church that has been open to see the Plan of God from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

And to be open to who and what we, in-Christ, can become. <p>

And so, in parting, I say what Jesus said to His Disciples long ago: ***"I'll see you later,"*** and continue to be taught by God's Holy Spirit of the Oneness of who and what Christ desires to be in you.

In closing, I share Paul's great parting words to the Church in Philippi, when he said . . .

"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ."

We love you . . . we will miss you . . . and we WILL . . . in-Christ Jesus . . . ***"see you again."***

Prayer/Hymn of Invitation: ***"Just As I Am"*** #342