

John 16:25-33

From last week's text, we skip about 20 verses to arrive at our text for this week. We skipped 16:5-24 not because they aren't important, but because there simply is not enough time in the church year to have fit it in. 16:25 begins a new thought of Jesus, so it is not as important that we know what he just said as it is in many of the texts we have studied. So, without further ado, let's get to it...

16:25

Jesus admits that he has been hard to understand. And while John does not contain any of the parables recorded in the synoptic gospels, he does record some difficult sayings of Jesus. We have seen how these sayings have left the disciples scratching their heads and asking questions. Already in this discourse, Peter, Thomas, Philip and Judas have asked him questions, betraying their lack of comprehension of what Jesus had said.

What this means for us is that we are in good company if we do not understand everything that we read in the Bible, especially when it comes to the "red ink." However, our lack of comprehension does not prevent God from having his way with us, forgiving us, and giving us the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

The verse ends with Jesus saying that he will speak plainly with his disciples. The question is: when will that hour come? We are not told, but that Jesus uses the loaded term "hour" makes me think that he's talking about his crucifixion.

16:26

Jesus tells his disciples that they will be able to pray directly to the Father through him; they will not need him to go to the Father on their behalf. (Although Jesus still intercede for his own, they will be able to pray to the Father also.) And again the question is: when is that day? Is it the same day as "the hour" or is it another time? Two answers come to mind:

1. "That Day" and "The Hour" are synonymous. They point to the event of the crucifixion. In the crucifixion, Jesus speaks to his disciples clearly about who he is. In fact, it is from the cross that we see God's love for us in Christ, we see sins forgiven, and we see life given. From that moment on, as people who have been forgiven, we can go directly to the Father in prayer in Jesus' name; the barrier having been broken down.
2. "That Day" refers to the end of the age. We will be able to directly speak with the Father because he will live with us and us with him in unveiled glory, not hiddenly as in this age. (Glass dimly stuff...)

16:27

Now, at first glance, it appears as though Jesus is saying: "you loved me first and believed on your own that I came from God. Therefore, because you did these two things, the Father loves you." However, this is not the case. The Father loves those who believe that Jesus came from him and who love Jesus. In other words,

God is on the side of those who align themselves with Jesus. This is a particularly important thing for Jesus to say in view of his pending arrest, trial and execution. Even though it looks like God is smiling on those who put Jesus to death, this is not the case. And today, it might look like God is smiling on those who persecute the church and even speak out against him, deny he exists and live their lives in defiance of his will. But this verse says that is not the case: God loves those who are in Christ. That is the standard of God's love.

16:28

Jesus again tells his disciples what must happen to him. He has come and he will go. This verse plays nicely with the one that came before it. Just as it might look like God loves those who war against the Church of Christ, so too it might look like God has abandoned Jesus in letting him die on the cross. Jesus says this isn't the case: God loves those who believe in and love him AND his going away means his return to the Father, just as his coming into the world means he came from the Father.

16:29

You can imagine the relief of the disciples at this point. For years they have been following Jesus and not getting it. Now, he speaks words they can understand. FINALLY! Like hearing a sermon that connects after years of listening to the pastor blah-blah-blah, you can imagine the relief of the disciples!

16:30

The disciples summarize what it is they have come to believe about Jesus:

- Jesus knows all things.
- He does not need to be questioned.
- Therefore, he has come from God.

The first and last we would expect the disciples to say. But the second thing, that Jesus doesn't need to be questioned, might sound a little strange. So let's talk about it. Why is it significant that Jesus does not need to be questioned by anyone? (Think: why would people question a teacher? What is gained by questioning a teacher?)

16:31

Different translations handle this verse... differently. The ESV has Jesus asking a question: "Do you now believe?" Whereas the NIV has Jesus exclaiming: "You believe at last!" Both are significantly different. One implies the disciple still don't get it. The other that the disciples have finally come to faith.

So which one is right? Keep in mind there is no punctuation in Greek. The Greek text reads: "arti pisteuete." OK, that's not helpful other than to demonstrate that your pastor uses his Greek New Testament at least from time to time. The second word: PISTEUETE is a second person present tense conjugation of the verb "to believe." The first word means "now" or "at the present time." So, literally: "you are believing now," or "now you are believing!"

So which one is right, the NIV or the ESV? I'd have to side with the NIV. I do not get a sense that Jesus is asking a question here. Beside that, this is Jesus' reply to the last thing the disciples will say before he launches into his "great high priestly prayer." It's as if Jesus has been giving one last sermon in order to elicit

the response of faith from his disciples before he is arrested. Having elicited that response, he moves on to prayer. (In a few verses... which we'll get to now.)

16:32

Having declared their faith, Jesus will go on to predict their abandonment of him. It's as if he says: "you believe in me now, but you will act in a manner inconsistent with your faith." (Sound familiar? Sound a bit like those of us who believe in Jesus today?) But Jesus goes on to say that their abandonment of him does not change or hinder what he is going to do. And the same is true today: the disciples of Jesus betray their Lord all the time, and yet the Kingdom of God is still moving forward, still saving people, still undoing the curse. Why? Because the work of God on earth depends on God, not people.

16:33

Jesus tells them why he has predicted their abandonment of him: it is so that they will not lose heart. Their salvation depends on Jesus, who has overcome the world, and not on themselves. For us, when we look to reassure ourselves that we are forgiven, saved, and have been given eternal life, we do not look to our faith, but the one in whom we believe: Jesus Christ, our Lord!