

Things Jesus Can't Tell Us Yet

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on June 14, 1992.
Scripture Lesson: John 16:12-15.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

A little five year old boy asks his father, "Daddy, where did I come from?"

The Father is taken aback. What a precocious boy! But he wants to be a good father. He knows that if he doesn't tell his son about sexual reproduction that his boy will eventually get his information from the television or from movies. So the father nervously sits down with his son on his lap and proceeds to tell him, for the next half hour, the facts of life as best he can. His son's eyes grow wide in astonishment and disbelief. Finally the little boy says, "Gosh, Dad. I just wanted to know if I came from Pennsylvania or New York."

There are many things that parents have to say to children that they can't yet bear. We try to tell our children the things that are appropriate to their age and capacity.

Christ is like that. On the night that he was betrayed, He told his disciples in the Upper Room, "I still have many things to say to you, but you can't bear them now." The same is true of us today. Jesus has many things he wants to tell us but we aren't yet able to bear them. There are basically three reasons why we're unable to bear them. Sometimes we aren't able to understand what he wants to tell us. Sometimes we're not emotionally strong enough to hear what he has to tell us. And sometimes we simply don't want to hear what he has to tell us.

1. First, there are many things that we don't have the capacity to understand at the time. When our boys were learning to read we started with simple picture

books. We didn't start off with Tolstoy. When I was in high ninth grade I took Latin I. I barely passed. I had a lot of Cs, Ds and Es. In tenth grade I made the mistake of taking Latin II. We were supposed to translate Caesar's Gallic Wars. It was unbearable! After one week, Miss Kirk, my Latin teacher kindly suggested that I wasn't ready yet for Latin II. As it turned out I took Latin I a second time and got all A's. In eleventh grade I was ready for Caesar's Gallic Wars.

A lot of the things Christ has to say to us are beyond our capacity to understand at the present time. We need to master the basics first. We need to first hear and understand that our relationship to God is based on what God has done for us in Christ and not what we have done. When we get the basics down we can go on to more difficult things.

There are some things we simply wouldn't understand if Christ were to tell us. For example, this is Trinity Sunday. I can't understand very well the mystery of the Holy Trinity. There's only one God but this one God is in three persons. The Father is God but the Father is not the Son or the Spirit. The Son is God but the Son is not the Father or the Spirit. And the Spirit is God but the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. But there are not three gods. There's only one God. Now I'd like Christ to explain that to me some day but ~~✗~~ considering that I failed physics in high school, I think that I'm not yet able to bear what Christ has to say about the Trinity.

This morning we received three new members. Last week we received ten young people by profession of faith. They've studied and discussed the Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith. They've written their confessions of faith.

They've heard something of the history of the church and they've discussed how the church is governed. But joining the church is only the beginning of our pilgrimage with Jesus. There are many other things Jesus has to tell you... far too many things to cram into six weeks... you wouldn't be able to bear everything that Jesus has to say to you at the present time. But you have the rest of your life to learn. Please don't stop now! If God is active in our lives all of us should be growing. Be sure to worship regularly. Become involved in a small group Bible Study. As you read the Bible and pray and worship regularly and support the work of Christ with your tithes and offerings and serve Christ in your work and home Jesus will have more to say to you concerning the will of God for your life.

2. But there's another reason Jesus can't yet tell us all that he wants to.

~~Sometimes~~ Sometimes we're not emotionally strong enough to bear what Christ has to say to us. If, seven years ago, Christ had told me, "Ted, I'm calling you to a church in Oxford, Pennsylvania. They have a large, historic, Victorian Gothic sanctuary in the center of town and the bell tower has a steeple that can be seen from ten miles away. Three years after you get there, the sanctuary is going to burn and the steeple will fall to the ground. It will take nearly three years before you start to rebuild, and you won't have enough money to do everything you've planned right away, and it might take years and years before it's completed." If Jesus had told me that, I would have said, "Forget it!" I wouldn't have been able to bear it.

There are many things that Jesus has to say to us that we're unable to bear emotionally at the present time. What if Christ would have told you parents, years

ago, what it would be like to raise a teenager? What if Christ would have told you years ago that you might lose your job or get cancer? You would have gone through life bearing a heavy burden.

Thank God that Jesus doesn't spell out for us everything's that going to happen. He has, however, promised us His Spirit to the church to help us understand and find some meaning in the things that are to come and to help us as a church to apply what God has told us in the ancient Word to new and constantly changing situations today.

3. Thirdly, there are many things that Jesus has to tell us but we can't yet bear them because we haven't acted on what he's already told us. Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord!', 'Lord!' and do not the things that I tell you."

Juan Carlos Ortiz, a South American minister, would sometimes irritate his congregation. He'd go to the pulpit and, maybe, read the words of Jesus from the *Sermon on the Mount*. "Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you." Ortiz would then shut the Bible and say to the congregation. "There will be no sermon today. You're dismissed. Go out and obey what Jesus has told you. If you obey what he says, then we'll go on to something else next week."

The next week he'd ask the congregation he'd ask if anyone had begged anything of them. What did they do? If most had gone home and forgotten to obey he'd read the same passage again and dismiss them with the command to obey. "Let's make sure we obey this before we go on to something else Jesus has to tell

us." Well, he almost got kicked out of the church for pulling tricks like that. But there's something to be said for his method. There are many things that Christ has to tell us but he's not going to until we start acting on what he has already said. It's not the hard to understand passages in the Bible that disturb me as much as the plain things that Jesus tells us that I don't obey.

So, there are many things that Jesus has to say to us but we're not ready yet for one reason or another. There are many things I wish Jesus would tell me about how to go about rebuilding our church. There are many things I wish Jesus would tell me about effective evangelism in a secular culture. There are many things I wish Jesus would tell us about involving more and more of our congregation in the work and ministry of Jesus Christ. There are many things that we don't know the answers to.

But I'm confident that Jesus will tell us what we need to know, through his Spirit, as together, as a church, we seek to learn and obey and trust what God has already said to us. Whether you're an older member or a newer member, let's review what Jesus has already told us in the Written Word of God. Let's read the Gospels by ourselves and together. Let's pray for the Spirit to guide us. Let's experiment by obeying what he has told us and then sharing together what happens when we obey.

Let us pray: God the Father, we adore you. All that you have you share with your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Son, we adore you. All that you have, you share with the Spirit. God, the Holy Spirit, we adore you. You guide us into all truth. You do not speak on your own authority, but speak whatever you hear from the Father and the Son, and declares to us the things that are to come. You glorify the Lord Jesus Christ because you tell us only what Christ wants us to hear. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.