

July 4, 2021 – Small Groups

Read John 16:25-33

1. Jesus gave His final four lessons to His disciples before He would be betrayed. The first lesson is about His speaking plainly about the Father when He had been speaking in figures of speech to His disciples. Jesus was alluding to the Holy Spirit who will bring to mind in a new and clearer light the words of Jesus to His disciples. How have you experienced the "plain speech" of the Holy Spirit in your reading, studying, and meditating the words of Scripture?

Answers will vary as people share how they've experienced reading through the Bible. Some may express struggling with it. Some may express being transformed and uplifted by it.

2. Jesus' second lesson was about prayer. He taught His disciples that we can approach God as Father because the Father loves us as He loves the Son. What often hinders our approaching God with confidence, assurance, and as our good and generous Father?

Our pride often gets in the way. We have grown accustomed to taking care of ourselves and our problems, at least, that is the illusion. We go about our lives assured of our self-sufficiency or striving to some semblance of it. We can also have psychological and emotional trauma related to spiritual and religious abuse, of abuse or absence from our fathers or male parent-guardian figures, of warped notions of Christianity, or manipulative relationships -- these can impact our interactions with God in prayer.

3. The third lesson is a warning about being self-assured in our Christian faith. As important as right doctrine and living are, they do not guarantee safety and protection in life. In what ways do we as Christians become self-assured in our own faith and religion?

We can depend too much on our own religious and moral piety, our discipline and rigour, believing that as long as we live righteously, diligently, and conscientiously, we will be healthy, wealthy, and wise. We can depend too much on our own sense of liberated self or independence, unshackling from rigid traditions and structures, striving towards our self-made, self-actualized, authentic identities, while often colliding and being jostled by the waves and winds of external expectations and demands.

4. The fourth and last lesson is an encouragement. Jesus guarantees trouble in this life, but reminds us that He has overcome the world. And His way of overcoming the world was through the cross. How could we as Christians overcome the troubles of this life the same way as Jesus did?

We emulate the way of the cross. We are not surprised by the reality of suffering but we also do not accept it as the ultimate reality and so strive towards the transformation of all things. We are neither naively optimistic or despairingly morose. The cross has led

to the resurrection. And so, our groaning and suffering never ends in death. This is how we are empowered to make true sacrifices, of giving up things for others, of suffering loss for others' gain.