

Coming

John 14

Let's recite this together as a doctrine we believe and hold together - from our EFCA statement of faith:

"We believe in the personal, bodily [Premillennial] and **glorious return** of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission." EFCA Statement of Faith, Article 9

Our denomination just updated this one word in the statement over the summer: replacing "Premillennial" with "glorious." Aren't you glad to know that ***the return of Christ will officially be GLORIOUS?*** And now we have given Jesus permission to decide the timing of his return relative to His millennial reign - wasn't that thoughtful of us?

See the blog for more detailed rationale for this change of words. The quick summary is that while our movement has predominantly held a Premillennial view of the end times - and continues to do so - we do not believe this word needs to be in our statement of faith because it is not an essential doctrine. The beauty of the EFCA is that ***we major on the majors and give freedom in secondary matters.*** The details on how history will end are tricky to understand. For example, here are the three views on the millennium:

The Return of Christ

- Premillennial - before 1,000 yr. reign
- Postmillennial - after 1,000 yr. reign
- Amillennial - after "1,000 yr." reign

"They came to life and reigned with Christ for **1,000 years.**" Revelation 20:4

The premillennial view is that when Jesus comes back he will reign on THIS earth, in Jerusalem, over ethnic Israel on David's throne for a literal 1,000 years. ***The postmillennial view*** is that Jesus will increasingly reign through us, His church, until the world reflects the peace, love and justice of His kingdom everywhere. Once the world is completely under His authority, then he will return. ***The amillennial view*** is that we are, right now, living under the reign of Jesus for a figurative 1,000 years - a complete age of history. Tricky, right?

Here is how my OT professor summed it all up:

The Return of Christ

- Jesus is coming back soon!
- He will defeat all of His enemies!

The details we don't know and the timing we CAN'T know. But these two things we know with absolute certainty! Jesus is coming and His return is closer today than it was yesterday. And when Jesus does come back, it will not be on the back of a donkey announcing peace on earth but will be on a war horse leading the armies of heaven. When He appears the whole world will somehow see Him all at one time and in that moment ***every knee will bow before Him*** and every tongue will confess that He is the undisputed Lord of Lords.

Truly, the return of Christ will be GLORIOUS! Brothers and sisters, this is our blessed hope. And it is our sure conviction. Jesus is coming soon. Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus!

Now, let's focus in on **John 14** - one of the most comforting passages in all of Scripture. Jesus had just washed his disciples feet and begun to tell them that he was going away. They were understandably worried about his departure, and so he said:

Three Comforting Promises from Jesus

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." John 14:1

In this passage we will see three comforting promises from Jesus. This was His goal in **assuring His disciples** that He was leaving them but that He had a plan and a place for them - but first He had to prepare it. We'll see in a moment what that means. Here at the outset notice Jesus' purpose: "Let not your hearts be troubled."

He knew that what was coming would be difficult for them. ***When Jesus was arrested, tried and then executed***; when they laid him in a tomb - it was the biggest test of faith for all the disciples. Their leader was dead! And as we saw in the resurrection accounts, they really did not believe he was coming back from the dead. It took quite a bit of convincing for them to accept the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead - touching the scars, seeing him eat food, hearing that he had appeared to lots of different people at different places and at different times...

So Jesus tried to prepare them - saying, "Don't panic. Don't be discouraged. BELIEVE."

We saw this a few weeks ago when Jesus calmed the storm. Remember how he rebuked the disciples saying, ***"Why are you so afraid? Have you still NO FAITH?"*** The problem wasn't that they feared the storm too much but that they feared JESUS too little! When Jesus

silenced the storm with just a word they marveled at him and said, ***“WHO IS THIS that the wind and the sea obey him?”***

Now Jesus - in the moment of his greatest suffering - is calling his disciples to **TRUST HIM** and trust the Father. Oh brothers and sisters, may we hear this from our Lord today. Believe. Rest in the Lord's hands. We have seen over and over again that Jesus Christ is Lord! He reigns as the One who is ***Supreme in knowledge, Supreme in love, Supreme in power and Supreme in grace.*** He conquered sin and death. The resurrection was the final and ultimate proof of Jesus' identity and victory. He IS the Son of God. His sacrifice was sufficient to cover all of our sins. Through his resurrection he conquered sin and death forever.

BELIEVE. Trust. Rest in Him. Don't panic. Don't let your hearts be troubled today. ***Whatever you carried into the service today - leave it here.*** Leave it right at Jesus' feet. He is the sovereign King. Listen to His comforting promises. First of all:

1. He has prepared a place for us

“In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” John 14:2

When Jesus said this, where was he about to go? This whole section of the gospel of John is called the Farewell Discourse. This was Jesus' final extensive teaching before he went to the cross.

So when Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you” did he mean ***he had to run up to heaven to build some houses and prepare some furniture and food?*** Of course not! Jesus is the One through whom the whole Universe was created. It was at the Word of Jesus saying, “Let there be light” that light first began to shine in our world. Jesus did not need time and supplies to prepare heaven for us.

The work of preparation was much, much harder than that. When Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you,” **he was talking about the cross.** That was the work Jesus had to do. That was the reason he came.

1. He has prepared a place for us

a. By going to the cross

“In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” John 14:2

Just a few verses later Jesus says, "I AM THE WAY, and the truth and the life." **How did Jesus become the WAY to the Father?** How did He become the gate for the sheep? How did he become the resurrection and the life? The bread of life and the living water?

The answer is - **He died and rose again.** That was His work. That was what He came to do. And praise the Lord, as He hung on the cross **He did not say, "It is ALMOST finished."** That's how life is for all of us - so many UNFINISHED tasks. Our work never really seems done, does it? But Jesus finished the work of redemption right there as he suffered and died on the cross.

Here is how Paul so beautifully says it in 2 Corinthians 5:

1. He has prepared a place for us
 - b. By going to the cross
 - c. **He prepared us for His place**

"God made him who had not sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21

This was the work Jesus had to do to prepare a place for us. Really he had to prepare US for His place. Jesus did not need 2,000 years to prepare heaven for His people, He needed the cross **to prepare people for His heaven.** (That's your tweetable line for this message.)

Jesus did not need 2,000 years to prepare heaven for His people, He needed the cross to prepare people for His heaven.

Jesus BECAME SIN so we could become righteous IN HIM. Think of what that means. While he hung on the cross, Jesus was covered by our sin. He was consumed by our sin. It became His very identity. **It was like a virus that got into His internal systems and multiplied** to the point that it took over His body until it killed Him.

Sin is built into our nature. It was no part of Jesus' nature. Sin is part of our daily experience. It was never a part of Jesus' daily experience. Sin is woven into EVERYTHING we do, say or think. This is the doctrine of TOTAL DEPRAVITY. It's not that we are all as bad as we could possibly be, but it's that every part of us is twisted and tainted by sin. All of us are totally depraved. Every part of us is corrupted - at least a little - by our sin.

But not Jesus. No part of Him was stained by sin. Not his thoughts. Not his feelings. Not his body. Not a single choice. Not a single stray desire of His will. Every single part of him -

heart, soul, mind and strength was perfectly devoted to worship and serve the Father. 100%.

UNTIL the cross. There on the cross

- The HOLY ONE became corrupt.
- The sinless One became sin.
- The righteous one was covered with iniquity.
- The Law-Giver was condemned as a Law-breaker.

Jesus BECAME sin so YOU could become righteous IN HIM. ***Have you felt the full force of that gospel truth recently?*** It's not just that Jesus died on the cross. The physical suffering is just a window into the spiritual agony Jesus suffered as He endured the full wrath of God against your sin and mine. All of the sins of mankind throughout all of history were laid upon Jesus while the sun's light was blotted out and the earth shook and the rocks split open.

He took our sin INTO HIMSELF, carried it all into death and the grave so that there in the tomb it could be fully and finally, eternally eradicated.

Imagine you have **terminal cancer** and the only way to treat it is to get ***a full blood transfusion.*** An ordinary one won't treat your cancer because it is very attached to your cells. So you need a special transfusion in which another person TRADES their healthy blood for your cancer-filled blood. It is only by drawing your blood INTO another person that it can be drawn OUT OF you.

That is precisely what Jesus did for all of us on the cross. ***He drew your SIN-filled blood into His body and infused His RIGHTEOUSNESS-filled blood INTO YOU.*** "He became sin so that we could become righteousness IN HIM." That's what Jesus meant when he said, "I'm going to prepare a place for you." This is our faithful suffering-servant Savior! He has prepared a place for us by preparing us for His place. Since He fulfilled that promise so wonderfully we have every confidence he will fulfill the other two:

2. He is coming back soon!

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." John 14:3

There are **two lies that non-Christians tell each other** when one of them dies. One - ***"he is in a better place."*** And two - ***"we'll see him again one day."*** The truth is that anyone who dies outside of the protection of Jesus does not go to a better place - they go to the place of eternal suffering, misery and regret. And the truth is that death is the final

separation for the non-believer. They will never see each other again. Death is the end. It is the trapdoor into darkness and unending isolation.

Apart from Jesus, there is no hope in the face of death. Death is a grim, powerful and terrible enemy. There is only One who has defeated death. Therefore there is only One who can provide hope to others in the face of death. His name is Jesus! He prepared a place for us by going to the cross and He assured us of His victory by rising from the dead. Then He ascended into heaven to show how He will come back!

Consider how different the two arrivals of Jesus will be:

Jesus' First Coming	Jesus' Second Coming
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Barely noticed, quiet2. In humility and weakness3. To bring peace and begin our salvation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Seen by all, noisy2. In power and glory3. To bring justice and complete our salvation

When Jesus was conceived in Mary, she and Joseph were the only ones who knew. That first arrival of Jesus was literally invisible - microscopic. Then his birth was in a humble manger in a remote village called Bethlehem. The Almighty Creator of all things was born as a fully human baby who couldn't talk or walk or remember any Bible verses. Imagine! And Jesus' first coming was to bring peace on earth - symbolized by riding a donkey - and to begin the work of our salvation.

In contrast, **Jesus' second coming will be a global event** - every eye will see Him at once. The armies of heaven will be with Him and the trumpet of the archangel will sound. Jesus will be mounted on a great war horse as a symbol of power and unstoppable victory. In Bethlehem he was wrapped in strips of cloth, but at His return Jesus will be wearing His glorious heavenly robes and His eternal crown of ultimate authority and power. And when Jesus comes back it will not be to die on a cross but to separate - once and for all - those who belong to Him from those who do not.

Here are the very last words of the Bible:

2. He is coming back soon!

“He who testifies to these things says, ***'Surely I am coming soon.'*** Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.” Revelation 22:20-21

Jesus Himself speaks these words of comfort and assurance to us - "SURELY, I am coming soon!" **Does your heart long for His coming?** Do you feel like a bride separated from her beloved fiance?

Hear this - ***if you don't care about Jesus' return...*** If your heart doesn't leap to think of His arrival... If you feel FEAR or dread or indifference about Jesus return don't ignore those feelings - deal with them. That could mean you need to settle your relationship with Jesus! Don't leave that unresolved! Settle that issue today! **Fall on your knees before Jesus** and call on Him to forgive you, to cleanse you and to make you His own!

Jesus is coming back soon! Our Savior and King is coming to bring us home to be with Him forever - that is the third promise in John 14:

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

"I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." John 14:3

The imagery here is of ***a young man making promises to His betrothed***. For some reason he has to travel - he has to be away from her for a while. But he says, "I will be back for you and we will be together always after that! I have to go because there is work I must do - preparations I must make. But all of it is for YOU so we can be together." So the young bride to be must wait patiently for her bridegroom to return!

Brothers, sisters, **we are the bride of Christ!** Our bridegroom is coming back for us! When Jesus comes back it will be to initiate our wedding celebration - and we will be with Him - our Beloved - forever and ever! This will be the central joy of heaven - just to BE WITH THE LORD.

The disciples get hung up on the process - "We don't know how to get to you, Lord!" But Jesus says:

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life... If you had known me, you would have known my Father also... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:6,7,9

Jesus responds, basically - you couldn't have gotten to me - and **that's why I came TO YOU**. And that's why **I'm coming back FOR YOU**. The whole point of all of this is to know God - to see Him - to be united with Him in relationship. To see Jesus is to see the Father. To know Jesus is to know God. And that is what heaven will be! Listen to how Paul says it in 1

Thes.:

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

“For *the Lord himself* will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” 1 Thes. 4:16

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

“Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and *so we will always be with the Lord*. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” 1 Thes. 4:17-18

What greater encouragement could there be than **the PROMISE of being reunited with your Beloved**? Kristin and I were separated for one year after I graduated but she still had a year of school. It was exactly 205 miles between Chicago and Upland, Indiana. I could cover that distance in my Dodge Colt in just over 3.5 hours. But I was a youth pastor so I had work to do that kept me from her. And by “work” I mean things like playing dodgeball and riding bikes, we invented a game called “poor man’s lacrosse” where you cut the bottom off a milk jug and use a whiffle ball and hockey goals. The point is, I was busy - but whenever I could I jumped in my Colt and raced off to see my Beloved.

That is how we should feel about the coming of the Lord! He is coming SOON! Not in an ‘89 Dodge Colt but riding a mighty white horse.

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

“We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because *we shall see him as he is*. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” 1 John 3:2-3

Here is our blessed hope - that one day soon our Lord will appear and in that moment we will see Him face to face. Now we can only see through a dark and hazy window - but then we will see Him clearly. Now our vision is impaired by our sin and the brokenness of this world. Then all of our sin will be finally purged away and the whole world will be UNMADE so Jesus can REMAKE it - all things new!

Two applications:

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

“We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him *purifies himself as he is pure*.” 1 John 3:2-3

- In light of this blessed hope, believers in Jesus should be **pure**

We urge young couples to **guard their purity before the wedding day**. In Passport to Purity Dennis and Barbara Rainey fill *a water balloon* with water to represent the totality of your purity. Then you poke a little hole in it and squeeze out a drop or two - representing a little compromise in a relationship right now. That relationship ends and you start another one - poking another hole and squeezing out a couple more drops. How sad would it be, on your wedding day, to have a deflated little balloon with almost nothing left to give JUST TO YOUR BELOVED ONE?

Are we keeping ourselves pure and holy for our Bridegroom who is coming? Are we guarding our hearts and minds from the temptations of this world? Are we fully devoted to worshipping and serving Christ alone or *is our love diluted and distracted* by the love of money, the love of applause, the love of worldly success, the love of work, the growth of our families, the advancement of our children...

Jesus is coming back soon! This should fill us with joyful anticipation to **fight for holiness** - not because we HAVE TO but because we GET TO see Jesus soon! It is so important to have one or two brothers or sisters beside you in this fight. We cannot stand alone in this struggle with sin - we must lock arms with one another to hold fast to Jesus, to stand in His truth and power and victory. We need to encourage and uphold one another in the battle to keep ourselves from being contaminated by this world filled with idolatry.

Jesus told a parable about **ten young women** waiting for the return of the Bridegroom. It was their job to watch for his return, keeping their lamps full of oil so as soon as he appeared they could rush out to greet him and lead him to the wedding site to meet his bride. Sadly, five of the young virgins fell asleep and were startled awake by the arrival of the bridegroom. As a result of their negligence their lamps had gone out and they had no more oil. They went to the five women who had tended their lamps but there was not enough oil to share. So the five who had fallen asleep had to run into town to get more oil and while they did that, the wedding party started and they missed it.

What a tragic picture of MISSING OUT on Jesus' return - missing the whole point. Listen to Jesus:

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

“And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and *those who were ready* went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.” Matthew 25:10

- In light of this blessed hope, believers in Jesus should be **pure**

There is ***a FINALITY to the return of Christ***. When Jesus comes back it will be too late to make a decision to trust in Him or follow Him. NOW is the time decisions must be made, allegiances must be settled. THEN it will be too late - the door will be closed and those outside will not be able to get in.

Are you READY? Are we prepared like the wise virgins? Or are you negligent of your relationship with Jesus? Dear friend, do not put this off. Nothing is more important than to settle where you stand with Jesus! PREPARE by professing your faith in and allegiance to Jesus as YOUR KING - YOUR coming bridegroom. Be pure in your love and devotion. And finally: believers should not only be PURE but we should also be PRODUCTIVE.

Jesus follows the parable of the 10 virgins with **the parable of the talents**. The master gave three of his servants different amounts of money and then went away on a long journey. The first two servants used the money in business, investing it to make more. And when the master came back they were able to show him what they had accomplished with His resources. Here is what the Master said to them:

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

“His master said to him, ***Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.***” Matthew 25:23

- In light of this blessed hope, believers in Jesus should be **productive**

But the third servant was afraid. Instead of using the one talent given to him he hid it - literally ***buried it in the ground***. He justified this decision by blaming the Master for being stingy and harsh. So the Master said to the lazy, self-justifying servant:

3. He will take us to be with Him forever

“You wicked and slothful servant! ... Cast ***the worthless servant*** into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 25:26,30

- Believers in Jesus should be **productive**

These are deliberately scary, sobering parables. They are meant to make us really stop and think. Am I like the wise or foolish virgins? Am I like the hard working servants or like the lazy, wicked one? How am I using the resources God has entrusted to me? Am I PRODUCTIVE - working for His Kingdom purposes? Or am I lazy and selfish, indulging myself and my own comforts while the work of the Master is left unattended?

Be sure of this - **the Day of the Lord is coming and it is coming soon**. It will not be a day

or time when ANYONE expects it. Believers can watch for certain signs, but everyone will be surprised. ***Some will be surprised with JOY*** that the day they have longed for has finally come. ***Others will be surprised with TERROR***. The day they thought was still far off has come upon them like a sudden storm - like a hurricane - and they did not prepare at all.

Brothers, sisters - **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe in Jesus.”**

He gave us these comforting promises as our wonderful assurance and our blessed hope!

1. He has prepared a place for us - by going to the cross Jesus prepared US for His place!
2. Jesus is coming back soon!
3. And Jesus will take us to be with Him forever!

Let's sing of the Greatness of our Lord and the joy of that Day when He comes for us!