

In That Day
John 16:23-33

In that day – this thought has been on my mind several times in the last couple of weeks. Two Sundays ago as I stood and spoke the Benediction it struck me that the day will come when it is the last time I speak those words to you. This past Tuesday Darla and I met with an attorney to update our will. The day will come when it will be put into effect. Today is the third anniversary of my father's death. Yes, I have given some thought to "In that day."

The context of our reading from John is that Jesus knows His time with His disciples is coming to a close. It is Thursday of Holy Week. He will be nailed to His cross the next day. He has just instituted His last will and testament promising the forgiveness of sins through the eating of His Body and drinking of His blood adding, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Things in my life, things in your life, will not continue on the same way forever. That could be good news if you are going through a tough time right now. It could be an unwelcomed thought if you are cruising along comfortably.

We have had quite a run here, you and I. Our daughter Sarah turned 21 yesterday. She wasn't even born when we moved to Manchester. There have been a few bumps in the road, but for the most part it has been a pretty comfortable ride.

Is that a good thing? ... Opinions may vary.

The disciples were having a hard time believing that the changes coming their way were a good thing.

Jesus had told them several times already that He would be delivered into the hands of the religious leaders in Jerusalem and be put to death. They didn't understand, or didn't want to understand because they wanted to keep on keeping on like they had been.

But that was not the plan for Jesus' life. It is not the way our lives are. Today we recognize three high school seniors who will be high school graduates in just a matter of days. Their lives will be changing.

When I arrived at KMCH on Friday, Rob Edwards greeted with more enthusiasm than usual. He jumped right in to tell me that it was his last day at the radio station, and that he was glad to be able to see me one more time.

Time marches on, and our lives change. Rude and disrespectful middle schoolers will not always be that way. They will get older and graduate. Will they learn some respect and treat others better than they do now? We'll have to wait and see.

There isn't so much wait and see with the disciples. Yes, changes are coming for them, but Jesus tells them how it is going to be. They don't have to wonder or worry. *"[T]he hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

Change is coming for the disciples, but Jesus tells them how it will be. *"In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father*

himself loves you, because you have loved me and believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

Jesus will not be with them like He has been, but they will still have His love, and the love of the Father.

Have they been boneheads? Yes, but Jesus does not wash His hands of them. Have we been boneheads? Yes, but Jesus does not wash His hands of you.

The disciples argued about who was the greatest among them. They wanted to put limits on the number of times they should forgive others. They tried to chase little children away from Jesus.

We are good at comparing ourselves to others and coming out on top. We hear of someone’s sin and think “I would never do that.” We can always find someone who is a bigger sinner than we are, but where does that leave us? As sinners, deserving of God’s wrath.

Have you ever decided who you will forgive and who you will not forgive? It’s very easy for us to hold onto the hurt and hold a grudge. That’s our nature. We often fail at forgiveness. Do we want to be forgiven as we have forgiven others? Do we really want God to forgive our trespasses and we have forgiven those who trespass against us? That can be a scary thought – for good reason – forgiving is not our strong suit.

Have we chased children away from Jesus? Maybe not intentionally. But have we done some very un-Jesus-like things in their presence? Lashing out in anger with our tongue or hand? Or maybe even worse – ignoring them – not giving

them the time and attention they deserve as a child of God? And it is not just children we offend with our un-Christ-like words and deeds.

Does Jesus forgive His boneheaded disciples? Yes. Does Jesus forgive you? Yes! As Jesus’ time with His disciples comes to a close, He tenderly assures them that He loves them and forgives them, and assures them of the Father’s love for them.

They are very glad that He speaks plainly to them. They need to know that their faith in Him is not in vain. Jesus gives them that assurance. He speaks plainly to them of His continued love and forgiveness that in Him they may have peace. Changes are coming their way, but they can count on Jesus and His word to carry them through.

That promise is for you as well. Our closing hymn today asks, “Jerusalem, my happy home, When shall I come to thee? When shall my sorrows have an end? Thy joys when shall I see?” ... We don’t know.

We do know that Jesus is with us as we continue to walk life’s way. And we know that we will be with Him and all the saints forever. Those who have gone before us in the faith are with Him already. We will join them one day. This is Jesus’ promise to all who believe in Him. Amen.