

Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here in Mark 12:38-44, Jesus warns against becoming like the teachers of the law because their focus is self-centered. It's all about me. It's all about doing things to commend myself to God – to show that I am better than other people.

He warns them and us about that because it's a dead end. Such a path leads to destruction. We can't commend ourselves to God. We can't by our works make ourselves worthy of His love.

He loves us simply by His choice. He has chosen to love us as dearly loved children – as the treasure of His heart. And by that love, He works in us to make us loveable. By His love we are changed. We are made new. By His choice, He loves us where we are at. But He loves us too much to leave us there. He is at work to make us into the treasure that He calls us to be.

Day Two

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Here in John 14:1-12, Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure. He tells them why He is going away and that they shouldn't be troubled. He is going away to prepare a place for them so that He can come back and take them to be with Him where He is.

Part of that preparation is the work that is about to complete. He has kept His Father's law perfectly. He is obedient to His Father's will – obedient even to death on the cross. He goes away from them so that He can suffer the penalty that they and we deserve because we are sinful human beings. He is condemned in our place so that we can live in Him.

Whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper, that is a time when Jesus keeps this promise that He made to the Twelve. He comes to us in the supper – in the bread and wine – to invite us to come to His table – to come to that place that He has prepared for us. He does that so that we can know that there is indeed a place for us in His home. What a joy!

Day Three

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John 14:15-21 is a short passage in which Jesus says a great deal. He is going away, but He is not going to leave His disciples as orphans. He will give them another Counselor (the Holy Spirit) who will be with them forever. Because Jesus lives, so will they.

Those promises are given to us as well. He will not leave us as orphans. When we were baptized, we received the Holy Spirit who lives with us and in us. Because Jesus lives, we will live also. That's another promise attached to baptism. We have joined with Jesus in His death and life. The empty tomb is the guarantee that because He lives, so will we.

Jesus also expresses His desire to show Himself to us. He wants to be known – to be seen – for who He is and what He has done to save us from sin and death. His Word – the Scriptures – are the means that He uses to make Himself known – to show Himself to us. Take some time today to read His Word so that He can show Himself to you.

Day Four

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Here in John 14:23-29, Jesus leaves His peace with the disciples. He is going to leave and He doesn't want their hearts to be troubled. So He gives them His peace. And it's not the same kind of peace that the world wants to give. It's not the absence of trials or troubles. They will have plenty of that.

It's a peace that is more than a feeling of ease. It's a possession. Jesus gives us His peace. It's a peace with God – a peace that comes from a restored relationship with God. It's a peace that says your future is secure. There is nothing you have to do to earn peace with God. It is Jesus' gift to you.

So in the midst of troubles (and the disciples – and we – will have many before we are reunited with Jesus), we rest in His peace secure in the knowledge that there is a place for us in God's house and at His table. Because the tomb is empty, we rest secure knowing that the grave is not our final destination. Jesus has gone away to prepare a place for us so that He can come back to take us to be with Him.

Day Five

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Here in John 15:26-27 and John 16:4b-11, Jesus is telling His disciples that His going away is for their good. No one really believes that when some loved one says that it's for you good that they must go away. No one wants a loved one to go away. Separation is a sorrowful thing.

But it really is for their (and our) good that Jesus goes away. And He's not just talking about going back to His Father. He's not just talking about His ascension into heaven. He's talking about going to the cross. He's talking about dying. He's talking about suffering the condemnation that they (and we) deserve and descending into Hell. He is talking about what must be done to save us all from the power of sin and death – from their power to keep us separated from God.

If He doesn't go away and suffer all that is needed to set us free, then we would still be under the power of sin and death. We would still be held prisoners in their chains and separated from God. Thanks be to God that Jesus went away so that He could come back to us and welcome us into His home. Through His Word and the waters of Baptism, Jesus has done just that. He has come to us for whom He died, so that He could bring us home.