

Guest Preacher - Rev. Roddy John Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together in the gospel according to John and chapter 14 and we can read from the beginning.

And our main focus this morning will be on these words, I go to prepare a place for you. I am sure that you will have heard many sermon upon the verses that we have chosen today as our text. Nevertheless, we are apt to forget and need to be reminded again and again of the Lord's teachings.

What took place in the Upper Room covers five chapters in John's gospel, but it all occurred in just a few hours. Now, although John does not record for us all that took place in the Upper Room, such, for example, the institution of the Lord's Supper, nevertheless, John chapter 13 to 17 is the most complete record that we have of what occurred and what was said that evening.

We are reading the other gospels of how they came to be in the Upper Room in Matthew chapter 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22.

[1 : 51] And there we are told how the preparations were made to have Jesus and the disciples seated in the Upper Room. And when Jesus and his disciples arrived at the Upper Room, we read that everything was prepared for them and ready.

And they all took their places around what was probably a U-shaped table. And John introduces these events for us that took place in the Upper Room with these words in chapter 13.

Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end. That is how John introduces to us the events that was to take place in the Upper Room. John assures us that Jesus knew all that was coming.

Jesus was on a divine timetable. He is not taken by surprise. He is in complete command and control of the situation.

[3 : 04] And he knew that it marked the decisive end of his earthly ministry among his disciples. Luke records for us the words of Jesus, This, of course, was not the first time that his impending death dawned upon Jesus.

It was something that was gradually dawning upon him until the realization of it eventually overwhelms him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Recently, I had spoken about it to his disciples, and although they rejected such thoughts, nevertheless, it was in the full and reassuring knowledge of this fact that he made his way towards Jerusalem, towards the cross.

In chapter 12 of this gospel, Jesus makes a clear allusion to his impending death when he says, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. And again, in that selfsame chapter, verse 32, he speaks of being lifted up from the earth. And John adds that he said this to his disciples to indicate the kind of death that he was to die.

[4 : 33] But even with such knowledge, Jesus was nevertheless preoccupied with the needs of others. We know what filled his mind that evening, because it is reflected in what he spent those hours in the Upper Room talking about.

He immersed himself in personal ministry to his disciples. He was consumed with the task of strengthening, reassuring, and preparing them for the trial they would soon endure, in a lifetime of ministry that would follow.

Some may ask, how could Jesus be so preoccupied with the needs of his disciples, with the needs of others, when he knew himself what was laid out before him?

The answer is given, again, in these words that we have already quoted from chapter 13, when Jesus knew that his son had come to depart out of this world to the Father, that that was what really captivated his mind, that having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his sons, and they had come from God and was going back to God. He knew that he was returning into the Father who had sent him into the world.

[6 : 09] He knew that the way back to the Father was the way of the cross. He knew that he would soon complete the purpose and the mission that was given him by the Father in sending him into this world.

that he was fulfilling God's purpose concerning him, that he was fulfilling God's mission concerning him, but he was fulfilling God's will concerning him.

In a truly short time, the visible presence of Jesus on earth would come to an end. And he knew that that would cause confusion and bewildering in the minds and in the hearts of his disciples, that it would set them on a path of fear.

So at this hour, he wanted to reassure them and seal to them his love, to them and to his own people who were in the world.

We are told, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end. Now, as we continue to look at this discourse that took place in the Upper Room on the night that the Lord Jesus was betrayed, he had told his disciples that he was leaving them.

[7 : 30] He had told them that one of them would betray him and that Peter would deny him. And this obviously resulted in troubled hearts. But Jesus assures them that their hearts need not be troubled, as they believe in God, also to believe in him.

In other words, the cure of a troubled heart is faith. It is trust. It is belief. Then he goes on to tell and give them the reasons why they should calm their hearts to spell it out to them in verses 2 and 3.

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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. That where I am, you may be also. He tells them that his divine purpose involves their arrival in the Father's home.

That his divine purpose involves their arrival in heaven. He was reassuring them that his death and leaving them would not derail their hope of heaven.

[8 : 43] Their hope of being in heaven. In fact, he tells them that his leaving them would be only to make heaven ready for them. I go to prepare a place for you.

Now, in the authorised version, it says, In my father's house are many mansions. And we may wonder why the word mansions was used by the authorised version translators.

Because it is evident that it is impossible to have many mansions inside a house. However, it is worthy to note that in the culture of Palestine, in the time of Jesus, when a son married, he would seldom leave his father's house.

Instead, the father would simply add another wing to the existing house. And if he had many sons, then there would be many dwelling units, all combined to form an extended household.

And Jesus is referring to this practice of additional rooms being added to a home as a family increased in number. So that instead of the word mansions, we can, as the ESV uses, and their translation here before us today uses, the word rooms.

[10 : 02] In my father's house are many rooms. So Jesus turns to his disciples and says that one of the reasons he is leaving them is to go and prepare a place there for them.

I go to prepare a place for you. This statement has often been taken as a reference to the work done by the Saviour on the cross.

Others think that there is some form of heavenly activity in which he is engaged in preparing a particular place for each of his disciples in the father's house.

But we must remember that heaven already existed when Jesus spoke these words. So he wasn't going away to create heaven for them.

Undoubtedly, everything he would do from his death to his second return would constitute preparations for his people to join him.

[11 : 03] I go to prepare a place for you. Well, let's consider what preparing a place for his people would mean for Jesus.

It was necessary not only that he should condescend into a low condition, but he had to expose himself to reproach, contempt, shame, with all that the world and Satan could bring upon him. He had to undergo things that was difficult and hard and terrible. To undergo the curse of the law with the greatest of terrors and sorrows in his soul until he gave his spirit into the hands of the father.

All these things were necessary and without them there would be no salvation. As we already noted to the children, the Lord requires of us and commands us to remember his death.

His death was part of the preparation for the salvation of his people. To be in heaven meant that Jesus had to die.

[12 : 24] That Jesus had to meet with what our sins deserve. That Jesus had to fulfill the law on our behalf and to meet with what our sins deserved.

But I believe that the preparation goes beyond his death. For he rose again and ascended to heaven to the right hand of the father.

As we already noted this morning, we cannot really separate the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are united together and they must remain united together in terms of our salvation.

So his preparation goes beyond his death. For he rose again and he ascended to heaven to the right hand of the father.

And let's consider his present ministry at the father's right hand as a work of preparation. When he ascended up into heaven, he ascended as the mediator of the church.

[13 : 29] And we know that the mediatorship of Christ includes three functions. He functions as a prophet and as a priest and as a king.

These are the functions of his mediatorship. Therefore, when Christ ascended, it wasn't simply to lead a life of glory, of majesty and blessedness, but a life of mediatorship as the prophet, priest and king of his church.

Our present safety, our future eternal salvation, depends upon his exercising of that office in heaven.

He continues as our prophet, priest and king. He has entered into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us. In heaven he exercises all his love, compassion, pity and care towards his church and towards every member of his church.

From there he makes effectual the atonement that he has made for sin by procuring the application of the benefits of his atoning work in reconciliation and peace with God into the soul and the consciences of his people.

[14 : 54] He undertakes from there his people's protection and he pleads on their behalf against all the accusations of Satan because Satan yet accuses them before God.

But Christ is their advocate at the throne of grace, frustrating all Satan's attempts. He intercedes for them and communicates to his people the grace and glory and the supplies of the Spirit and the accomplishment of all the covenant promises.

He tells them, I go to prepare a place for you. It certainly involves his work on the cross of Golgotha. It certainly involves his present ministry at the right hand of the Father. But I think there is something that goes beyond that.

And that is that it involves the physical presence of Christ. It involves his humanity as well.

[16 : 01] When Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father, something amazing entered into heaven. And that is the second person of the Trinity, God the Son in human form.

He wasn't there before in human form. But the day that he ascended and entered heaven, Christ entered in human form.

When he ascended to heaven, he did so in bodily form. And that is part of the preparation. As well as the cross and his present ministry, there was also the fact that he went into heaven in bodily form.

That's part of the preparation work. I go to prepare a place for you. In the book of Hebrews, we read these words, Here we are given a rare insight into a conversation that took place between God the Son and God the Father as the Son is about to be conceived in the womb of his virgin mother, Mary.

What was the dialogue that took place? Sacrifice and offerings you have not desired in burnt offerings, but a body you have prepared for me.

[17 : 39] When he came into the world, he took the body that was prepared for him. And in that body, he lived for around 33 years. In that body, he bore our sins.

He became our substitute. And he died on the cross. That body was buried and rose on the third day. And now that he is going back to heaven, he is taking that human nature with him.

He is taking his body with him. He did not discard his humanity, but he took it into the very presence of God. And that was part of the preparation.

I go to prepare a place for you. He has never discarded the human nature that he assumed in his incarnation. He has, but has ascended into heaven in bodily form.

We have faith in the ascension of the body as much as we have faith in the resurrection of the body. The same Christ, the same Jesus, who was born and suffered in the body, also ascended in the body.

[18 : 47] In his ascension, we have this staggering thought. Because of the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ, the dust of earth now sits on the throne of heaven.

Clement of Alexandria once said, he was carried up into heaven so that he might share the Father's throne even with the flesh that was united to him.

The Scottish theologian Thomas Boston said that when the people of God reach heaven, they will see Jesus Christ, God and man, with their bodily eyes, as he will never lay aside the human nature. They will behold that glorious, blessed body which is personally united to the divine nature and exalted above principalities and powers and every name that is named.

There we shall see with our eyes that very body which was born of Mary at Bethlehem, crucified at Jerusalem between the two thieves, that blessed head that was crowned with thorns, the face that was spat upon, the hands and feet that were nailed to the cross, all shining with inconceivable glory.

[20 : 06] The body prepared, the body crucified, the body buried, the body risen, the body that ascended to the right hand of the Father.

We shall all see that body shining with inconceivable glory. What great comfort it is for us this morning to know that God is not at that distant from us, but that in Jesus we have Emmanuel, we have God with us.

Those who perish under the gospel are without excuse for God in the person of the Son, condescended to save sinners like me and you.

When we reflect upon the exaltation of Jesus Christ as we find in the answer to the catechism question, wherein consisteth Christ's exaltation?

And the answer is, Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

[21 : 19] His resurrection is the proof that his work on the cross was sufficient to deal with our sins. If what he did on the cross was insufficient for dealing with our sins, he would not have been raised again on the third day.

But Jesus, as our great high priest, entered with his blood into heaven before the presence of God at the moment of his death, when he resigned his spirit to God and his blood was poured out on the cross.

The phrase he entered with his own blood speaks plainly of the separation between soul and body. That separation took place. Christ's resurrection on the third day was equivalent to the return of the high priest from the Holy of Holies.

He is alive, and the sacrifice has been accepted. After 40 days, he entered into heaven with body and soul, and his entrance then was a triumphant entrance, as we shall come to sing later on in Psalm 24.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O engine doors, that the King of glory may come in. As we already noted this morning, a resurrection without ascension would be unthinkable according to the plan of God.

[22 : 44] I go to prepare a place for you. Recorded for us in this self-same gospel in chapter 17, just before he left the Abarum, and crossed over the Bukhredon, and entered into the garden.

He lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you. So what are we to understand from this prayer?

Is that he is praying that his human nature, the body that was prepared for him, and which he united to his person, will be exalted, as to share as far as human nature can in the glory which is a divine person he had beside the Father before the world began.

This could not happen until he ascended triumphantly into the presence of God. I go to prepare a place for you.

There in the prayer of John 17, the Son is praying, transform my human nature, transfigure my human nature, put my human nature in the glory I had with you before the world began.

[24 : 00] This would involve the transformation of the body of Jesus. In this world, he had a body of humiliation, a body that was limited, that underwent flogging, and bruising, and death.

But God would raise it from the dead in power and in glory. We must remember that it is the human nature that is subject of all these changes. Divine nature remains unchanged, but it's human nature. It is possible to be changed. The ascension, according to Leon Morris, is the indication to his followers that his mission is accomplished, his work among them has come to a decisive end. When he ascended far above all the heavens, the Son of God returned to the place he had condescended from when he took our nature to himself.

As we have already spoken of, there was a special day in the Jewish calendar known as the Day of Atonement. This was the only day that the high priest of Israel could enter into the most holy place.

[25 : 09] He was all on his own while the people remained and waited outside. The most holy place was where God dwelt between the cherubim and the Ark of the Covenant in Shekinah glory.

On that day, the high priest would put off his robes of beauty and glory and put on white linen robes and take the blood with him and perform the required rituals there.

Afterwards, he would come out of the most holy place and exchange his white linen robes and put on again the robes of beauty and glory. Now upon that robe of beauty and glory, there was a golden bell and a pomegranate.

A golden bell and a pomegranate around the hem of that robe. And as soon as he wore it and began to walk, its sound would be heard by those that was waiting outside.

They would know that the high priest was alive. The sound also meant that the blood had been accepted by God and that atonement had been made for another year after which the same ritual would have to be performed again.

[26 : 21] But the writer to Hebrew informs her that Christ entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, as the high priest in Israel did, but by means of his own blood.

Thus, according to the writer to the Hebrew, securing eternal redemption for his people. You see, there are three outstanding differences between the entrance of the high priest of Israel into the holy of holies and Christ's entrance into heaven.

The first one, Christ went not with the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood. Israel's high priest entrance had to be repeated every year, but Christ entered with his own blood once.

And the high priest only secured his own entrance into the presence of God. No one else could enter into the most holy place but the high priest. People could not follow him. But Christ's own blood secured an entrance for all his people to follow.

He was the forerunner for us. In his ascension, he was restored to the glories of heaven and the worship of the heavenly angels.

[27 : 36] Leaving this world, he was going to the Father. In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 12, we read, But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

This expression, the right hand of God, symbolically indicates his supreme dominion and authority over heaven and earth. The right hand of any angel monarch was a place of exalted honour and royal government.

Thus, for Jesus to sit down at the right hand of the Father, was to exercise equal and absolute rule over the entire universe. The risen Christ is the eternal King.

Paul, writing to the church at Philippi, says, wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

I go to prepare a place for you. The fact that Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father also indicates to us that his work was complete, that his atoning work was complete, that his sacrifice on the cross of Golgotha had been accepted because no high priest ever sat down in all the rituals of the Old Testament.

[29 : 11] No high priest ever sat down. There was no chair in the tabernacle for them to sit down. They were always standing. But our great high priest Jesus Christ sat down having completed his atoning work his blood being accepted by the Father.

He sat down at the right hand of God the hand of power authority and majesty. When Jesus as our great high priest entered with his blood into heaven before the presence of God he may be considered at the moment of his death when he resigned his spirit to God and his blood was poured on the cross.

The atonement for Israel was not completed or achieved till the sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the ark of the covenant. This corresponds with the entrance of Christ into heaven immediately after his death.

Christ's resurrection on the third day was equivalent to the return of the high priest from the holy of all. He's alive. The sacrifice has been accepted.

Sometimes we might perhaps focus too much upon the word prepare when we should focus perhaps more upon the word for you.

[30 : 35] I go to prepare a place for you. For you. Becomes personal does it not?

I go to prepare a place for you. The emphasis on the fact that there is a place in the Father's home for you.

One reason why those who believe in Jesus should not be troubled by hardship and adverse circumstances or when the future is uncertain is that we have a home in heaven.

We have a place in heaven. Jesus said I go to prepare a place. I'm going to the cross. I'm going to have a heavenly ministry.

I am going there physically. I'm bringing my body there to heaven with me. I go to prepare a place for you.

[31 : 36] If it were not so I would have told you. What he is saying to them is trust my promises what a reassurance those words must have been to the frightened disciples that dark night when he told them that he was going to leave them.

But as surely as Jesus was leaving he would come again in person to receive them personally into the place that he had prepared for them. What a prospect for poor sinful creatures.

And the great thing today for us to in considering these words I go to prepare a place for you is that your home?

Did he prepare a place for you? Are you one for whom Jesus has gone to prepare a place in heaven? Later on he says I am the way.

I am the way to the Father. I am the way to heaven. There is no other way to the Father's house but through him. I go to prepare a place for you.

[32 : 51] It is certain that you shall leave this world for a disappointed to man wants to die. But what then? We are all on our journey to our long home but where will that be?

In a place of blessing or in a place of weeping? Apart from trusting in the finished atoning work of Jesus on the cross, no one can get into heaven.

For he says that he has gone to prepare a place in heaven for all those who will put their trust in him. And for all those who will put their trust in him, there is this promise that he gives on the eve of his death.

I go to prepare a place for you. I go to prepare a place for you. Well, are you today rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God?

Do you know the joy of being in possession of a place that has been prepared and reserved for you at your journey's end?

[34 : 02] Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you. I am going to the cross. I am going to continue a heavenly ministry for you.

I am going there physically with my body for you. I go to prepare a place for you.

and that great promise that has been given to us that on that day when he shall return and he will return that he will raise our bodies and he will make them like his own glorious body.

In some measure, I don't know how, but in some measure we will reflect the glory that belongs to the body of Christ.

the glory that he received when he ascended into heaven, when he entered into heaven in his ascension. The glory he received then, we will reflect in some measure that self-same glory, for we shall be made light into his glorious body.

[35 : 22] I go to prepare a place for you. are you among those for whom Jesus went to prepare a place?

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. O heavenly Father, we give thanks that you did send your son into this world, that he came and that he took the body that was prepared for him, and in that body that he suffered what our sins deserved, that he died, was buried, and rose again, and has ascended into heaven in bodily form.

and we give thanks that he will return again with that self-same body, and that our bodies in the resurrection of all those who have put their trust in him, will be raised from the grave, and will be made like into his glorious body, so that we shall enter into that place that he has prepared for us, that we shall enter into the inheritance that he has promised to give to us, and there that we shall be forever with the Lord.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for all these promises that they have been sealed for us, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us for the remainder of this thy day, and forgive us for our sins, in Jesus' name.

Amen. We shall conclude by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 24 on page 230, 230, at verse 7.

[37 : 03] Ye gates, lift up, your heads on high, ye doors that last foray. Be lifted up, that so the King of glory enter me. But who of glory is the King? The mighty Lord is this, even that self-lord, that great in might, and strong in battle is.

We shall sing down to the end of the Psalm. Psalm 24 at verse 7, to the Lord's praise, ye gates, lift up, your heads on high, ye doors that last foray.

Amen. Ye gates, lift up, your heads on high, ye doors that last foray.

Be lifted up, that so the King of glory enter me.

The King of glory is the King, the mighty Lord is this, in the sin earth that great in might, and strong in battle is.

[38 : 34] Hear the still earth that great in might, and strong in battle is.

Ye gates, lift up, your heads here, doors, doors that are to last foray.

Be lifted up, and so the King of glory enter me.

but! who is he that is the King?

The King of glory who is this? The Lord of hosts and of glory is the King of glory the King of glory is won't Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Amen, Amen.

[40 : 54] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.