

# ***“A Whole New World”***

Robert M. Thompson, Pastor

**Corinth Reformed Church**  
150 Sixteenth Avenue NW  
Hickory, North Carolina 28601  
828.328.6196 [corinthtoday.org](http://corinthtoday.org)

*(© 2022 by Robert M. Thompson. Manuscripts and video also available at [corinthtoday.org/sermons](http://corinthtoday.org/sermons).  
Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptures quoted are from 2011 New International Version.)*

***Believers have not only a visible team (the church) but an invisible one (the Trinity).***

***John 16:1-15***

***March 27, 2022***

***I can only imagine***

My preparation for this sermon began Monday morning with a question in John R. W. Stott’s commentary on John 16: “How do you talk about things that are not just out of the ordinary but that take you into a whole new world?”

“A whole new world.” I want you to imagine trying to explain what’s to come to an unborn baby. “You’re going to have so much fun on the playground.” Hmm. What’s a playground? I haven’t seen that. I haven’t seen anything yet.

“I’m going to hug you and love you so much. You’ll be warm and fed. Life will be so good.” Life is good right now. What could be better than this cozy chamber?

“You’re going to breathe clean air and eat ice cream and learn so many things I just can’t teach you yet.” Your voice is soothing, but your words are nonsense.

“And life’s going to be hard. It will start with a journey through a dark tunnel. If you’re not crying when you come out, we’ll smack you on the bottom. If you’re a boy, we’ve got a little uncomfortable surgery planned for you too.” That whole new world is impossible for the baby in the womb to grasp.

That’s a fairly good parallel for what Jesus is telling his disciples in the Upper Room. The Scripture before us may seem confusing. It’s really quite simple. It’s the night before Jesus’ death. That night and the next day, life as they know it will fall apart. It will be like going through a birth canal. Then there will be resurrection, and seven weeks later, Pentecost. A whole new world.

### ***Harder life than you think (1-4)***

*All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.*

What's ahead will be harder than they think. It's unkind not to offer that warning. That's what Jesus thinks anyway. It's going to be so hard, they will be at risk to "fall away" (1). It's better if he warns them.

They will be excluded from the place you thought was spiritually safe (2). In fact, some of them will be killed – worse, tortured and killed. Worse yet, those who kill them will believe they are doing God a favor – "offering a service to God." Another translation for "service" is "worship." Those who kill them will think, "God is so happy with me."

As pastors, we say (or at least think) this "harder than you think" message often. "We just got engaged!" "We're going to have a baby!" "I became a Christian." "I've decided to separate from my spouse." "I got a new job!" "I'm going to have surgery." "I'm going to give up drinking." "My loved one just died."

Life will almost always be harder than you think. Nobody offered easy. Any interpretation of the Christian life that implies easy borders on heresy. It's hard.

### ***Better support than you have (5-7)***

*Now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'*

*But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you.*

It's beginning to dawn on them that Jesus really is going somewhere. They don't yet grasp where or why, but he's leaving. "I am going to him who sent me." It's made them very quiet. The disciples interrupt and question Jesus in chapters 13 and 14, but there is apparently a long silence starting at the end of chapter 14 and all through 15.

Jesus says, "None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'" Peter actually had asked that exact question in 13:36. It was the same question, but with a different motive. He had used same whining voice Gus uses in My Big Fat Greek Wedding when he asks Toula, "Why you want to leave me?" Here in 16:5 Jesus is saying, "None of you is really interested in the larger picture of where I'm going and why."

Jesus says this surprising thing: "It's for your good that I am going away." These disciples had heard Jesus' teaching and witnessed his miracles. Why is it for their good?

“Unless I go away, the Advocate won’t come.” They’re getting an upgrade – from Jesus! Why is the Holy Spirit an upgrade? Let me ask you this question: If Jesus were still on earth today, where would he be? If you say, “Right here with us,” my question is, “Why not at St. Luke’s next door? Or on the south side of Hickory? He’d probably be in Ukraine or Poland.” Jesus had assumed a physical body in the incarnation. He was raised with a physical body. He still has it.

“Advocate” is a rich Greek word that means “to be called alongside.” It’s variously translated comforter, encourager, friend, helper. A *parakletos* will comfort or encourage or sometimes kick you in the pants. It’s what friends do. And he’ll always be there whenever you need him. You don’t have to go looking for Jesus. You have the Holy Spirit.

***Greater alliance than you see (8-11)***

*When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

There’s a lot of courtroom language in this passage. An advocate is like a defense attorney. He comes along side to support, defend. But the Holy Spirit is also a prosecutor. He will “prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.” Other translations say “convict,” “convince,” or “reprove.”

The Holy Spirit will flip the world’s system on itself. There will be battles ahead for these disciples. It will be them against the devil and the world. They will be David fighting Goliath. How can the Christian ever stand against such an enemy?

I’m not sure that either Ukraine or Russia thought about the alliance that would stand behind Ukraine, supplying besieged people with courage, news, history, defensive and offensive weapons. They’re not members of NATO, but the unity of NATO, of Republicans and Democrats in our own polarized country, of the entire free world “proves Russia to be in the wrong.”

There’s a whole system out there that opposes you and your world view. You don’t have to prove it wrong. The Holy Spirit does that.

*The world is wrong about sin.* Sin is not about sins. It’s about unbelief in Jesus.

*The world is wrong about righteousness.* The world thinks righteousness comes by effort or by pretense. Jesus exposed that false view of righteousness while he was on earth. The world’s “righteousness” crucified him. Now that Jesus is going to the Father, the Holy Spirit will convict the world that its righteousness is inadequate.

*The world is wrong about judgment.* It falsely judged Jesus as only human, as a pretender, as an ally of the devil. But “the prince of this world now stands condemned,” and the Holy Spirit is the one who shows him up.

These disciples and all believers have a greater enemy than we know. But we also have a greater alliance with the invisible Holy Spirit. He’s so much greater.

***Deeper truth than you know (12-15)***

*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.*

Just like the baby inside the womb, Jesus has more to say to these disciples than they “can now bear.” But there’s good news. The Holy Spirit will not only be their Advocate and the world’s prosecutor, he will guide them into “all the truth.” This astounding statement is part metaphor (nobody knows “all the truth,” not even the disciples), but Christians have historically understood this promise to foreshadow the writing of the New Testament. We still stand on the truth the Spirit revealed to them.

Right now, Jesus is giving them a little truth. It’s all they can handle at the moment. All a baby inside the womb needs to know is that she’s safe, that she’s provided for, that she’s loved. Later she’ll learn more when she can.

The Spirit will reveal “what is to come” when they need to know. They have no idea Jesus will die the next day. They don’t know he will rise on the third day. They don’t know he will ascend to the Father. They don’t know about Pentecost. They don’t know all of them will die before Jesus returns. They don’t know we’ll still be here 2,000 years later talking about what they don’t know.

Perhaps John is writing these words specifically recalling that he didn’t know the Spirit would reveal to him on the Island of Patmos how this world’s system would crumble and the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. This is “what is yet to come.”

But there’s something even more beautiful here in what John says. He speaks of “the Spirit of truth,” but also of “all that belongs to the Father” (15). The Father has given Jesus to the world. The Father and the Son give the Spirit to the world.

No image has ever captured – or ever will – the mystery of the Holy Trinity. What we know, and I realize I’m using very human language – is that there is a “team approach” in God. God was the first team, a tri-unity.

Don’t misunderstand my use of this illustration or image. I know who St. Peter’s plays next in March Madness, but I’m a North Carolinian and I’m pulling for Carolina and Duke. Still, though, St. Peter’s illustrates that the boys (or girls) on the floor are not alone.

Think of St. Peter's as the church. That works, right? The team has a great coach. He's their "Jesus." They have an athletic director who hired that coach and supports this team. He's their "Father." Then there's their invisible support – the peacock! You do know, don't you, that the peacock is a symbol of the risen Jesus? No illustration of the Holy Trinity is ever perfect, but St. Peter's basketball team has a trinity behind it.

What Jesus is saying in these final verses is bigger even than that the Spirit will "guide you into all truth." He's introducing them to a concept they cannot yet grasp – the mystery of the Trinity. The believer not only has a visible team, but an invisible one behind us – creating, redeeming, helping, defending, attacking, supporting, revealing.

### ***A new testament***

John 13-17 takes the form of an ancient "testament." It's a farewell address, and it follows a form common in the Bible (Moses, Samuel, David) and in other ancient literature. There are three primary components: (1) Exit: I'm leaving soon. (2) Comfort: You'll be OK. (3) Surrogate: I'll still be there for you – but through someone else. It's especially comforting if battles are ahead.

He's talking to them, but John is passing this on to us. He wants us never to forget in our own battles that Jesus promises...

- A harder life than you think,
- Better support than you have,
- Greater alliance than you can see, and
- Deeper truth than you know.

This passage is all about "a whole new world." The disciples can't imagine it. But they won't be alone. It will be different than what they've become accustomed to in the "womb" of Jesus' presence. Everything will be different. Transforming the world will take much longer – even to today.

I love this same image for heaven. It's hard sometimes for us to believe that there's a better life ahead than we know now. We hold on to this life because of its best joys – friends, highs, family, ice cream, pleasure, mountain views, March Madness. Sometimes we wonder, "Would I really want to go to heaven if that's not part of the package deal?" We ask, "What's heaven like?" as if to say, "Are you sure I will love it?"

One of my wife's favorite places on earth – of all the ones we've visited so far – is the Grand Canyon. She could sit for hours and behold God's beauty and greatness – a perspective on time and space. But suppose you tried to describe the Grand Canyon to your housecat? "It's even bigger than our living room!" "It's more fun than pouncing on a mouse!" "You'd stare at it longer than you sit on our window sill."

You get my analogy. The same way a baby inside his mother's womb cannot grasp that life on the outside will be better, the same way the disciples couldn't grasp that the Holy Spirit would be an upgrade, we can't imagine that heaven will be better than what we've known. It will be – so much better. No pain, no suffering, no grief – but also what no eye has seen and no mind can imagine. A whole new world. Amen.