Lesson 24
John 16–17

John 16

Verse 1: Jesus tells the disciples that he taught them “these things” so that they would not be offended. To what does “these things” refer? Is it just to the teaching in verses 26–27? Does it include verses 18–25? Is it the whole sermon that he gave in response to Thomas’s question “We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5) and Philip’s similar request (John 14:9)? Or is it to what he has said about the Comforter? Or something else in the preceding chapters?

A more literal translation of the word translated offended might be “caused to stumble.” What particular things were they facing that might make them stumble? What things in our lives are like those things?

How would the particular teachings of chapter 15 strengthen them against those difficulties?

Verse 2: How long was it before some people began to think that persecuting Christians was a service to God (verse 2)? (Answering that question may require some historical research, but the Internet should be a sufficient resource.) Are we ever guilty of that kind of thinking? For example, do we ever justify our mistreatment of another person because
we believe him to be a sinner? Are there ways in which we do so subtly? Do we have ways of doing so as a society, even if not as individuals?

The phrase “doeth God a service” translates a Greek phrase that literally means “offers worship to God to God,” since the verb translated service (latreia) means “to offer divine service to a god.” Why do you think Jesus uses this redundant expression?

**Verse 3:** What does verse 3 tell us about those who act hatefully toward us? What does that suggest about us when we act that way?

**Verses 4–6:** Did Jesus think the disciples would understand this sermon when he gave it? What might that tell us about the Gospels themselves?

Does the fact that Jesus gave them teachings that they could return to and remember later tell us anything about the way we learn? about how we should study?

In verse 5 Jesus says that none of them ask where he is going. What about John 13:36 and 14:3? How can he say this? Did they not understand what they were asking?

Do the disciples understand what is about to happen? If not, why are they sorrowing?

**Verses 7–11:** In verse 7 Jesus doesn’t say, “I have to leave you in order to work the atonement.” He says, “I have to leave you so that you can have the Comforter.” Explain what he says. (The footnote in the LDS edition may be helpful.)

Recall from the questions for lesson 23 that another translation of the Greek word translated comforter is advocate or
The idea of the Holy Ghost as our advocate is important to the metaphor that Christ uses in verse 8: though the world will judge you (verses 2–3), the Holy Ghost will defend you and convict the world. Against what does the Spirit defend us?

The word translated *reprove* in verse 8 could also be translated *convict* or *expose*. The King James Version translation, “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,” is somewhat misleading for modern readers. For us, it sounds as if the Advocate will convict the world of being righteous and having judgment. The phrase might be better translated “reveal the world with regard to sin, and with regard to righteousness, and with regard to judgment.” How does the Spirit reprove, convict, expose the world?

What evidence allows the Comforter to convict the world of sin? What evidence is relevant to deciding the world’s righteousness (verse 10)? Perhaps a better translation than *righteousness* would be *justice*. A better translation than *judged* in verse 11 is *condemned*.

Who is the prince of this world, and how is he condemned by the Comforter? What do these verses tell us about our need for the Holy Ghost?

**Verses 12–15:** Why couldn’t the disciples bear Jesus’s teachings at that time? What does *bear* mean in this context? Is Jesus saying that they cannot understand what he teaches or that, somehow, his teachings would weigh them down? If the latter, how would they weigh them down?

The Spirit of Truth can teach all truth (verse 13), presumably even the things that Jesus cannot teach because it would
weigh down his disciples. Why can the Holy Ghost teach them things that Jesus cannot?

Why is “Spirit of Truth” an apt name for the Holy Ghost in this sermon?

What does Jesus mean when he says that the Spirit of Truth will not speak of himself (verse 13)?

What “things to come” does the Comforter reveal? What thing that is to come has Jesus announced in his ministry?

How does the Holy Ghost glorify the Savior? What does it mean to say that he does?

What do verses 14–15 tell us the Comforter will reveal?

Verses 16–22: The disciples ask, “What does he mean that we will not see him in a little while and then in a little while we will?” Does the story of the woman in childbirth answer the disciples’ question? If so, how? If not, what question does it answer? Notice that a woman in travail—in childbirth labor—is a common Old Testament metaphor for deep anguish.

The scriptures often use the metaphor of marriage to describe the relationship between God and his people. Is this image of childbirth perhaps connected to that metaphor: ideally the consequence of marriage is childbirth, which requires travail; even so, the relationship between God and his people will result in travail for them? When we speak of our travails, we often say that God will compensate for each of them. Is that what this image suggests?

It may be important to note that the term man in verse 21 translates the Greek word anthrōpos, which means “human being” rather than “male person.”

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Verses 23–25: When the disciples see Christ again, why will they have no more questions? Of what are their questions a sign? Asking in Jesus’s name and receiving what we ask for has been an important theme of this sermon. (See John 14:13 and 15:7, and the repetition of the teaching in 3 Nephi 18:20.) Why is that such an important teaching? Why is it important to the disciples at this point in their spiritual development? What does it mean to us?

How is what Jesus says in the second sentence of verse 23 related to what he says in the first?

What is the promise of verse 25?

Verses 26–30: Why is verse 26 put in terms of the future rather than the present? Isn’t this something that the Savior already does for us?

In verse 27 “have believed” translates a verb that can also be translated “have had faith that” or “have trusted that”: the Father loves those who have loved Jesus and had faith or trust in him. Is there a difference between loving Christ and having faith in him?

What point is Jesus making in verse 28?

In verses 29–30 the disciples seem relieved. Paraphrased, they say, “Finally you are speaking plainly rather than in parables! We know you know everything. You don’t even need to have someone ask you a question in order to give them the answer. That is why we believe that you came from God.” Based on what have they concluded that Jesus knows their answers before they ask the questions? Why would that conclusion lead them to the further conclusion
that he came from God? Is what they affirm here the same as what Jesus said in verse 28 or something weaker?

**Verses 31–33:** In Greek verse 31 is ambiguous. It could be a question, as the King James translators have assumed, or it could be a statement: “Now you believe.” Try reading it each way to decide which you think is best.

“To his own” in verse 32 probably means “to his own home.” Literally it means something like “to that which belongs to him alone.” What contrast is Jesus making in speaking of their being sent back to their homes and his being alone?

What kind of peace does Jesus’s teaching bring? What does it mean to have peace *in* him? The preposition *in* is used frequently in the scriptures to speak of relationships: Christ is in the Father, we should be in Christ, we are in the body of Christ, and so on.

The phrase “be of good cheer” sounds to modern ears as if it means “be happy.” But Jesus isn’t telling his disciples, “You will have afflictions in life, but don’t worry; be happy.” (Recall that in verse 21 he has just said that we, like the woman in childbirth, will have sorrow.) The Greek here, as well as the corresponding King James English, means “Take courage,” “Be brave.” Why should the fact that Jesus has overcome or had victory over the world give us courage? Courage in the face of what?

**John 17**

Many Christians refer to this chapter as “The Great High Priestly Prayer.” Why do you think they do so? Latter-day
Saints usually call this prayer “The Great Intercessory Prayer.” Why? Are the two names for this prayer related? If so, how?

Though we know that Jesus prayed often, we know the content of only a few of his prayers. Why did John believe it was important to tell us what Jesus said in this prayer?

How does the form of this prayer fit the form given to us in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; and 3 Nephi 13:9–13)? If it doesn’t, how do you explain the difference?

**Verses 1–8:** Jesus has often talked about glorifying the Father. (See, for example, John 1:18; 2:11; 9:3; and 15:15.) What do you think he means by the word *glorify*? How will the Father glorify the Son?

Why does Jesus say that he will give eternal life to those whom the Father has given him (verse 2)? Whom has the Father given him? How has he given them to Jesus? What does it mean to belong to him, to be his possession?

Jesus defines what he means by “eternal life” in verse 3. Does that help answer the last question?

What kind of knowledge is Jesus talking about in verse 3? Compare Genesis 3:22 and Mosiah 4:12. Do they suggest how we should understand the word *know*?

Does Mosiah 4:12 help us understand the glorification of the Father and the Son that Jesus speaks of in verses 1, 4–5?

Does verse 6 explain how Jesus has glorified the Father?

What does he mean when he says, “I have manifested [or “revealed”] thy name unto the men [literally “persons”]”? 

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How has he revealed the name of the Father? Why is the Father’s name so important? What might it stand for?

What does it mean that those whom the Father gave to the Son were given “out of this world” (verse 6)?

How have they kept the Father’s word? What is the Father’s word?

Does the first clause of verse 7 explain what it means to know the Father (verse 3)? What it means that Jesus has manifested the Father’s name (verse 6)?

**Verses 9–10:** If God loves the world (John 3:16), why doesn’t Jesus pray for the world? Does world mean the same thing in each case? If not, explain the different meanings.

Why is it important that Jesus speak of the disciples as the common property of him and the Father? What does that tell us?

**Verses 11–13:** Here we find the request of Jesus’s prayer. He prays, “Now that I am leaving them in the world and coming to thee, keep those you’ve given me in your name so that they can be one in the same way that we are one.” Can you think of synonyms for keep (verse 11) that help you understand this better?

Why is the unity of the disciples so important now that the Savior is leaving them?

How were they kept up to this point (verse 12)?

The word translated lost in verse 12 could also be translated died. Why is Jesus using that wording? Is the implicit connection to death important to what he is saying?
Verses 14–16: Why do the disciples need the Father’s protection? What protection has been promised? (See John 16:7–8 as well as 15:7, 16.)

Why isn’t the Lord asking that the disciples be taken out of the world (verse 15)? If the disciples are not of this world (verse 16), why leave them behind when he knows that the world hates them and will persecute them (John 15:18–21 and 17:14)? Does this tell us anything about our own experience?

Verses 17–19: To sanctify something is to make it holy. What does it mean to be holy? To be made holy?

How does the Father make the Lord’s disciples holy? What does it mean to say that he does so “through thy truth”?

Jesus sent the disciples into the world, just as the Father sent Jesus into the world. Does that suggest that each has a similar mission? If so, what might it be?

How does Jesus sanctify himself? What does it mean that he does it “for their sakes”? How does his sanctification make their sanctification possible?

Verses 20–23: For whom has Jesus been praying up to this point (verse 20)? Why has he focused on praying for them? Now whom does he pray for?

What does the unity of believers show the world (verse 21)? Why is that important?

Jesus gives a standard for the unity of the Saints: “that they may be one, even as we are one” (verse 22). How are the Father and the Son one? How can we imitate that unity in the Church? Are there destructive ways in which we might
merely pretend to imitate that unity? How do we know the difference between real unity and false unity?

The word translated *perfect* (verse 23) can also be translated *complete*. But it means literally “to fulfill the purpose”; that which fulfills its purpose is perfect. Why is unity needed for perfection, for fulfilling our purpose?

**Verses 24–26:** When Jesus prays “that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am,” what is he asking for? Is he asking for something that only occurs at a future time or for something that can occur now?

What does verse 25 tell us about our relation to the Father?

Why might Jesus use the title “Righteous”—in other words, “Just Father”—here rather than another title?

Do these verses help explain the meaning of Doctrine and Covenants 46:13–14?

What promise does the Lord make when he says, “I have declared unto them thy name, *and will declare it*” (italics added)? What does it mean to declare the name of the Father? How does doing so put the Father’s love for the Savior in us?

Why does Jesus say that his declaration of the Father’s name will cause “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them” rather than “that thy love may be in them”?

Verses 26 once again uses the preposition *in* to describe Christ’s relationship with those whom he loves. How are your earlier reflections on that preposition relevant here?