

“A Cup of Inspiration and Courage”

John 17:1-11

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First Baptist Church

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Communion Sunday

This morning our attention is drawn to the final words Jesus spoke before he and the disciples left the Upper Room and went to the Garden of Gethsemane. This passage brings the Farewell Discourse to a close.

You recall Jesus and the disciples gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem to eat the Passover Meal. Jesus began their time together by washing their feet as an act of humility and service. He spent the remainder of the evening talking about his future and theirs.

Woven throughout everything he said to them was his undying devotion to God and love for them. Not even the threat of death could force him to be unfaithful to God or quit caring about them and their welfare.

Everything Jesus said up to this point in the Farewell Discourse was directed to the disciples. From John 13-16, Jesus looked around that table while he talked to them. In John 17, his attention dramatically shifted.

“After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so the Son can glorify you,’ ” John 17:1.

All of John 17 is a prayer. The disciples are never addressed, and they do not speak. It was time for Jesus to have a heart-to-heart talk with God about the biggest challenge he had ever faced.

It is one of the richest passages in the entire Bible. I strongly encourage you to read it carefully and study it diligently, and if you do, you will get a glimpse of how big Jesus’ heart was and how strong his faith was.

As we gather around this communion table today, I draw your attention to the first five words of Jesus’ prayer, “**Father, the hour has come.**” They are poignant and powerful.

To what was Jesus referring? What was it time for Jesus to do?

It was time to bring his earthly ministry to a close.

It was time to have a final confrontation with his enemies, the religious authorities, who were threatened by most of what he said and did because it exposed their hypocrisy and their addictions to power, prestige, attention, money and a lavish lifestyle funded by those they were called to serve.

It was time to put into practice everything he taught about loving your enemies, praying for those who hurt you and forgiving those who disappoint you.

It was time for Jesus to place his life in the hands of God and trust God to fulfill all His promises.

It was time for Jesus to accept the biggest challenge of his life and head down the toughest road he would ever travel, the Via Dolorosa.

“Father, the hour has come.”

What is it time for you to do this morning? What challenge awaits your response this week?

Do you need to confront a personal demon which is destroying your happiness and closest relationships?

Do you need to have a talk with your mate about the direction your marriage is going?

Do you need to go back to school or make the decision to be a better student when classes resume next fall?

Do you need to cultivate a positive attitude and grateful heart?

Do you need to take your doctor’s advice seriously and develop healthy habits?

Do you need to listen to your parents and make better decisions?

Do you need to curb your spending habits and work on getting out of debt?

Do you need to be more generous by using your time, talents and resources to make the world a better place for all to live?

Do you need to follow in Jesus’ footsteps by confronting the forces of evil and offering an alternative vision?

How long have you been thinking about what you need to do? How many times have you started, only to turn back out of fear or disgust? How often have you talked yourself out of doing what your heart yearned for or God asked of you?

The hardest road we travel is the one we don't want to go down. This road, however, is usually the one we most need to travel for our own welfare and those around us.

How do we embrace our hour, the challenge which awaits us this week? Begin where Jesus did.

"After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come.' "

Like Jesus, draw close to God and lean on Him to help you. Take your prayer life to a new level.

Get serious. Bare your soul and voice your fears. Acknowledge your weakness and tendency to quit when the road gets steep. Most of all, ask God to give you the wisdom, strength, stamina and courage you need to break out of your self-imposed prison by accepting every opportunity to make yourself and the world around you better.

Often life is bigger than we are. It is never bigger than the God who made us and is eager to help us meet every challenge.

Let go of the past. Don't forget it, but don't be held hostage to it. What was will never be again, good or bad. Trying to recapture it will only rob you of a future filled with unlimited possibilities.

I appreciate Tom Ehrich's insight into our text. He writes in his daily column, *Morning Walk*, "**The hour** comes many times to all of us. Change is constant in life. Sometimes we are ready, sometimes not. Sometimes the next change comes too soon, sometimes later than we wished. Sometimes the next change is what we planned, more often it is a surprise. However, the world around us is changing as are the people we love, and we cannot freeze time as hard as we may try."

Embrace the future. It is where God is.

Keep your eyes on the people who need you to move into the future and accept bold challenges. Don't let them down. Love them enough to take risks, make sacrifices and travel down difficult roads.

Do you remember the old gospel song, “When He was on the Cross, I was on His Mind?” There is a great amount of truth in this idea. Don’t forget the people who are depending upon you to love them enough to do the difficult.

Believe you can make a difference in the lives of those around you and those who will follow, just as many in your past made a difference in your life. Recall their courage, sacrifices, and the impact they had upon you. Follow their example and seize your opportunity to improve life for those around you.

Look for support. This is one reason Jesus made circle of friends everywhere he went. He needed them as much as they needed him.

I don’t recall one major change in my life that occurred without the support of family and friends. While there were times they could not accompany me on my journey, always they were cheering me on and praying for me. Surround yourself with people who will encourage and pray for you.

This morning, we honored our graduates. We are proud of these young people and grateful for their many contributions to our lives. We wish them well as they embark on new adventures.

As their church family, we also offer these precious graduates our support as they go. We certainly believe in them and recognize the potential God has given them. May they leave this room today with the same courage and confidence Jesus had when he left the Upper Room so many years ago. May all of us drink from this cup of inspiration and courage and leave this sacred place ready to seize our challenges, too.