
“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going” (John 14:1-4).

A Savior You Can Trust in Trying Times

It is an inexplicable joy to bring you God's Word this morning. God's grace has been sufficient every step of the way, providing for our church family exactly what we need each moment. I believe that God has also directed our Scripture for this morning. That direction came, in some way, from working so long with Pastor Mitchell, who probably would have said, “Just do the series. If you believe the Word of God is sufficient, then let the Word of God suffice for this situation.”

But the thought came to me on Monday. We were waiting for the ambulance to come and take Pastor Mitchell. And one of those in the circle said Mitchell looked as though he saw Jesus coming. And then our dear sister Beth, whom I talked with ahead of time about sharing this story, whispered, “I will receive you unto myself.” So standing there in our grief and shock, we read John Chapter 14: 1-4 and prayed together. This then is our passage for this morning.

Jesus gives us a command here to believe or to trust. To trust in God and to trust in Him. In troubled times, we can trust Jesus because He promises to give us everything that we need for life and for godliness. It's kind of an unexpected command. “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” But we can't just take a chapter and start with verse one without remembering what led up to it—without remembering what happened in John Chapter 13. Or the weeks and months leading up to this occasion. Jesus has warned His disciples on three occasions, that they are, going to Jerusalem, that the Son of Man will be turned over to his enemies, that He will suffer many things at their hands, that He must be killed, and that He will be raised again on the third day.

While the disciples do not fully understand, they certainly understand that a catastrophic, life-changing event is around the corner. And here Jesus is saying, “don't worry about it.” As part of this same conversation, he has just told them, in Chapter 13, “I tell you the truth, that one of you is going to betray me.” Now that’s the kind of news that can rock a person! Jesus tells them that one of them is going to be a traitor and will turn Jesus over and is not even to be counted among the redeemed.

And they murmured. *Who is it? What do you think he means?* Then when Peter says, "I'm ready to follow you anywhere, Jesus, I'm ready to die for you." And Jesus says, "Well actually, Peter before the rooster crows," (before the night is over), "You are going to deny me three times." It is to *these* men, who have just received such distressing news, that Jesus says, "Don't let your heart be troubled."

It's important to understand that Jesus understands. It's not just from Isaiah 53 that we know Jesus is a man of sorrows and well-acquainted with grief. We see it in his life. The disciples saw it just a few days earlier as they entered Jerusalem. He wept. He wept over that city. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem," a people hardhearted and turned against him. And he mourned the sad state of that people and that city. And the disciples will soon see this in the garden. Jesus is nearing the moment of the cross and experiencing such distress in prayer that his drops of sweat are like blood flowing from him. Jesus is a man who knows and understands distress.

Ironically, this word *troubled* appears in the previous three chapters of the Book of John, and it all has to do with Jesus. As Jesus is standing beside the grave of His friend Lazarus, He is *troubled*. In Chapter 12, as he is contemplating the events of the cross, He is *troubled*. In Chapter 13, as he is about to share with them of Judas's betrayal, Jesus is *troubled*. He is not telling them now that distress of the heart is a sinful state. In fact, quite the opposite. We understand very clearly that Jesus was entirely human. Jesus does not merely reach into our human experience and pull us out to something better. He enters entirely into our human experience. The Book of Hebrews tells us that he was tested and tempted in every way as we are. If you're going through it, Jesus has felt it. The only difference is that He was without sin. The author of Hebrews explains that this is why we have a sympathetic High Priest. He suffered as we suffered and understands what we are going through. Jesus enters into our situation and is tender towards us in our human weakness.

When he tells us, "don't be troubled," he is not condemning, but exhorting. The Greek grammar points to, *not continuing* in a certain state, of bringing a state to an end. At points in life, our hearts *are* troubled, deeply troubled, but we don't have to continue in that. Let's look at three particular troubles Jesus discusses that are underscored by John.

Betrayal

"I am telling you now before it happens so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me" (John 13: 19-21).

This is distressing news! These men have been together for three years. Traveling, eating, celebrating, weeping, in trouble, and out—yet always in joyful witness of the power of the

Word of God at work among them. It's the type of situation that binds a group of people together. They are a band of brothers, and Judas is a trusted member, so trusted that he carries the money bag. And here he is about to betray not only them but Jesus himself and to betray Jesus to death. This is life-changing distress the disciples are experiencing.

Absent

Jesus tells them he will no longer be with them, “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.” Jesus is their leader. Often, we read the Upper Room Discourse from the perspective of knowing the Great Commission and knowing about the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Believer. But here, in that upper room, Jesus isn't telling them what to do. Jesus isn't explaining to them how they will continue.

They have followed him faithfully. He is the one providing for their needs by multiplying bread and protecting them from harm by calming the wind and the waves. They don't know what it means to be without Jesus. And yet he is telling them that He's going to leave them on their own.

Persecution

“Persecution is coming, remember I told you it's going to be okay. You can trust in me.” Jesus describes this persecution on multiple occasions in the upper room. And talks specifically about the hatred that he will experience at the hands of the world, and the hatred the disciples will experience. Last week we talked about being put out of the synagogue and cut off from familial and social business and being entirely ostracized from society.

Jesus says that they will be put out of the synagogue. In fact, Jesus says, “they are going to kill you and think they're doing a service to God when they put you to death.” These are the deep troubles that Jesus is describing for the disciples. But now he tells them, “Do not continue to be troubled. Trust in God and trust also in me.”

Three Truths

We have a firm foundation.

Trusting in God is not new for the disciples. Being Jewish, they grew up in a society founded upon trust in God. Their history is bound up with the acts of God. Their identity is built around the concept of God and their culture is permeated with faith in God. From childhood, they have heard the stories of God acting on behalf of His people. This was their foundation— understanding God exists and acts on behalf of His people.

Trust in Jesus.

But Jesus adds something stretching. Trust in God. *But trust also in me.* The disciples have been taught that no human can make himself equal with God. And here is Jesus doing exactly that. This was difficult. It doesn't really jive with everything they have been told. Jesus is constantly pushing and testing their faith. He tells them that they have to leave everything behind. He tells them that they have to die daily and take up their cross. He tells them that now he's going to leave them—"But you can keep trusting in me. It's going to be hard, but you keep trusting in me."

Haven't we also been stretched this last week? It's hard to believe that last Sunday's message was John ten. Jesus is a Savior that you can trust. And he says, okay, here's the next thing you can trust me with. And he's going to keep stretching us. He's going to keep challenging us until the day that we meet him. Jesus says, "Trust in me. It's so important."

You can't trust your circumstances.

Jesus made that clear. For the disciples, their circumstances are going to change entirely. You can't trust in people. He's made that clear. As much as you trust someone, there's always the chance that they can let you down. People will always fail. The psalmist says, "Some trust in armies and chariots and horses. I trust the Lord."

Pastor Mitchell would be the very first one to say, "Don't trust in me. Trust in Jesus." He would be the very first one to direct our focus on Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus Christ, the unfailing one. He keeps all of His promises. He is the One that we can trust.

Put trust into action.

In light of the dangers and distresses the disciples are about to undergo, Jesus outlines these actions.

Love.

Recall in Chapter 13, the very direct connection between the love of Christ and what he is about to undergo. "Having loved his own, who were in the world, Jesus loved them to the end." Then in the very next verse, John talks about the betrayal of Judas. After Jesus outlines the betrayal and outlines Peter's denial, he tells the disciples, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34, 35).

The kind of betrayal that Judas is about to perpetrate can tear a group apart. The kind of loss that the disciples are about to experience can scatter a flock. Relationships now are characterized by doubt, "Are you going to do that, too? Can I really trust you?" "What is it that person thinking?" "Who's got what agenda?" But Jesus says, "I know all about Judas, and I'm washing his feet and I love him to the end. You love one another." This is the antidote for the danger and distresses that remind us to continue in the love of Jesus Christ. The whole world

then can look and say, "I can't believe what they've gone through. But look how they love one another. They really are followers of Jesus Christ."

Rely on the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is clear that He is leaving them. But He says, "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you." This might be really confusing for the disciples. Jesus says, "I am going away. You're going to look for me. You won't be able to find me. The world is going to look for me. They won't be able to find me. I am leaving you. But I'm not leaving you alone. I'm not leaving you as orphans. I will come to you."

Jesus then explains that he is talking about the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit among us. The Holy Spirit will come. The rest of these chapters are filled with the Holy Spirit and the comforts and guidance that the Holy Spirit brings. "He will guide you into all truth." And more than anything else, the Holy Spirit brings the very presence of Jesus Christ to us.

Yes, the disciples will not see Jesus. They will feel abandoned and alone, but they are not alone. Because the Holy Spirit is with them, Jesus is with them.

Remember the promise.

Jesus has overcome! When discussing persecution, Jesus is the victor. "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world." In the middle of difficulties, challenges, losses, grief, and trouble, we are often overwhelmed. But Jesus overcomes. Take heart.

Don't let your heart be troubled.

Jesus will return. This is expressed to us in such very intimate terms. In many scriptures we read about the glory of the return of Christ to Earth. But here, we're talking about the very personal return for each individual who trusts in Jesus. "Don't let your heart be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. I'm going to prepare a place for you. And if I go, I will come again to receive you unto myself." Personal. Loving. Unfailing. Jesus will come for every one of his own.

When we go through overwhelming trials and griefs, remember our unshakable promise, and very certain hope that Jesus is at the end of that road to receive his own to Himself.

Jesus concludes here, "You know the way to the place where I'm going." One of the disciples asks, "How can we know the way?" And Jesus says, "I am the way. You know the way because you know me." These beautiful promises are for those who know the Lord Jesus Christ. The way that the Lord Jesus Christ will open is the way of the cross.

What follows after this Upper Room Discourse? Jesus goes to the cross for my sin and for yours. It's Jesus Himself who makes the way, and says, "I want to come back and take you to be with me." But Jesus first says, "I want to take your sin and punishment and the death that you

deserve.” Jesus bore that on the cross in our place so that we, believing in him, could receive forgiveness and life and hope and a future.

Six lessons

It is okay to grieve. But Jesus tells us not to continue in grief. “We grieve, but not as those who have no hope.” “Let not your hearts be troubled.”

God is on our side. Rejoice. I have a devotional Psalter. I think Pastor Mitchell gave one to all the staff members. This morning I read Psalm 124.

If the LORD had not been on our side—

let Israel say—

² if the Lord had not been on our side

when people attacked us,

³ they would have swallowed us alive

when their anger flared against us;

⁴ the flood would have engulfed us,

the torrent would have swept over us,

⁵ the raging waters

would have swept us away.

⁶ Praise be to the Lord,

who has not let us be torn by their teeth.

⁷ We have escaped like a bird

from the fowler’s snare;

the snare has been broken,

and we have escaped.

⁸ Our help is in the name of the Lord,

the Maker of heaven and earth.

Overwhelmed. The waters rage. But he’s with us. He lifts us up and he carries us through. And we can overcome.

Jesus is Lord of the Church. “I say to you, you are Peter, a rock. And on this rock I [Jesus] will build my church and the gates of hell even will not overcome it.” Jesus is the foundation of the Church. He is the one who protects and guards and guides. He is our Chief Shepherd, and the One we can trust. He will be with us always. So let’s trust our church to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit will guide us. Every one of us has asked the question, “What’s next?” Praying is next. Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to guide us. So let’s pray for God’s guidance for our church. Pray for your elders. Pray for the district superintendent. He’s involved in the process of church leadership. Pray for each other. And let’s lean on the Holy Spirit for guidance. We don’t have to be in a hurry about that. “Trust in God. Trust also in me.” Jesus says I will give you a comforter and a counselor. He is with us.

The Holy Spirit will use us right now. We’ve got four pastors. We’ve got nine elders. We have each other. Let’s turn to each other and receive the Ministry of the Lord from each other.

Allow the Holy Spirit to use us in our particular ways of giftedness. Everything is different. It feels odd. Mitchell Gregory has been associated with Cary Alliance Church for many years. But, you know, the first person, and please forgive me I'm using your names just because I love you so much—and I could use a million other names, the first person I saw was Robin Orton carrying chairs into the nursery to make sure the nursery was set up. And I saw Andrew Needham. And we talked about the slides for this morning and made sure everything was in order. And there were Robert and Jean Coats setting up the coffee bar. Then the worship team came. And the Sunday school teachers. Later on, a needy couple came in and God provided just the right people to sit with them and talk with them and discern the situation.

We are grieving. But you know what? We are doing what God has gifted us to do for the ministry and encouragement and the building up of the Saints. And as we continue to minister, and the Holy Spirit enables us, God will work. The Holy Spirit is among us. Let him use us to minister to each other in this time of need.

The road that leads home. Pastor Mitchell did a video blog a couple of years ago on these very verses, it's quite different from this one. He speaks there of the glory and beauty of heaven and of the Savior who will accompany us there. We don't have to be overwhelmed because we know with absolute certainty where the road leads for every one of us who believes in the name of Jesus. That road leads straight to Him. Let's rejoice in this.

Thank you, Heavenly Father for Your Grace, which is sufficient for each day. Thank you that you are perfect. That even when we don't understand your ways, we can trust in your ways. Thank you that your intentions toward us are for the good. And that you provide what is needed to keep following you day by day. Thank you that, along with the Holy Spirit, we receive love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Thank you that along with your Spirit, we receive power for ministry. The ability to serve, and comfort. Thank you that even when we don't know how to pray, You pray through us. Father, Help us to claim these gifts and make them our own. Fill us up and use us. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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