

“Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled”

John 14:1-3

Introduction

Our text this morning begins with these overwhelmingly hopeful words; *Do not let your heart be troubled*. Could there be any more soothing and promising words ever spoken by our Lord? Whose has not needed to hear them? If you are like me, there is a magnetism to this passage that is like a cup of cold water on a hot day (or maybe I should say like a cup of hot cocoa on a freezing day!) Those words hold promise to meet the needs of the soul.

But the experience promised by those words is too often elusive. How we long for peace of heart! And at times, how hard it is to find. Troubled hearts come in different forms.

- Sometimes it's easy to see and understand why we are troubled. And we know that our troubles are OK. When we sent out Immanuel we experienced some kind of sadness. Our hearts were stirred, but we did it willingly and by faith, never considering that we shouldn't or wouldn't. Sending our children out into the world – to college or into marriage can do the same thing to us. It's not uncommon to have a little uneasiness, a little sadness – but it's overshadowed by the joy of faith and understanding that this is right.
- Sometimes, however our hearts are troubled and we cannot see with our

minds-eye why the Lord has chosen such a path for us. We know He could deliver us, but He either chose not to, or has not yet done so. In such times we can only embrace His promises by faith and trust that He will bring the good from it that He has promised. For many of you, this is the reality of your current situation. You are troubled in your heart and holding on only by faith.

- There are other times when we struggle to see the purposes of God in our trials, but the seeing is possible – it's not hidden from us - if we will open our eyes and live by faith. When God closes the door to a job, or a school or an opportunity, you can learn to see that God had better and different things in store. When we waited 10 years for a church building, we were able in the end when this building came available, to understand why God said no to every other possibility. Our hearts were troubled, but the answer was visible.

This morning we are going to face the fact that there are many things that can bring deep trouble and darkness to our souls. But we will learn that the way to overcome trouble in the soul is to exercise a strong and growing faith in Christ. This is the answer that Jesus offers to a troubled heart.

[John 14:1-7]

The word *troubled* in your English Bible means *stirred up, upset, frightened* or even *terrified*. It is very close to our English word *despair*.

Last summer I shared with you a list from the Bible of about 12 things that cause people to cry -

twelve things that might indicate a troubled heart. The list included things associated with sin like: rebellion against God's commands, temptation and judgment and betrayal. But the list also included everyday experiences of life without the infusion of sin. Things like unpleasant circumstances, sickness, physical pain, loneliness or the death of someone we love.

This is an interesting command to begin the chapter. *Do not let your heart be troubled.* Is it a sin for your heart to be troubled?

The answer is clearly *no*. It is important for us to understand that Jesus is not rebuking the disciples here for being troubled in their hearts. They were, after all, about to witness the horrible crucifixion of Christ. Before their very eyes, He would be put to death. He was about to leave them. This one whom they loved with all their hearts – this one whom they'd left everything in order to follow – was going away. Jesus understood their heavy, troubled hearts.

In fact, one of the most interesting things to realize here is that over the course of the last few chapters we are told that Jesus himself had a troubled heart three times!

John 11:33 - *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled*

John 12:27 - *Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.*

John 13:21 - *When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.*

So this command to not be troubled is not so much a rebuke from Jesus as it is a recognition of their sadness and an invitation to relief.

So what are Jesus' solutions for a troubled heart? They are in one sense very simple.

1. Belief. *Believe in God, believe also in Me.* The two times the word *believe* is used in this verse can be translated either in the imperative or command form, or the indicative or statement form. The Greek word is the same in either instance. So Jesus is either commanding them to believe in God or assuming that they do. In either case the significance is the same. The starting point for overcoming a troubled heart is belief in God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

There is important truth here that we ought to recognize because it has everything to do with our orientation to life in general. Have you ever thought about how you process life? What I mean by that is, what is your default when analyze the events in your life? Some people begin by viewing life with skepticism and cynicism. Everything is wrong until proven right. Everyone is guilty and suspect until cleared. Every act, action, heartache and problem is a point of anger, frustration and contention. For some people their starting point in life is distrust and external in nature.

But Jesus wants us to have a different orientation. The starting point for overcoming a troubled heart is belief and trust in God.

We have been studying the decrees of God in the evening service. What we have learned is that God is 100% sovereign over every detail of life. Now, that doesn't mean that there are not injustices this side of heaven or that sin is a real problem that causes heartache. But it does acknowledge that a great and good God is orchestrating all of life for His glory and our good. So we need to start with God when we are dealing with distress.

And this belief is not some generic belief in a higher being. The word *belief* means *trust*. Jesus said, don't just believe in God, but realize that that belief finds its expression by trusting in the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Trust in Christ is the hardest when we can't make sense of things. Trusting Christ is most difficult when we are closest to despair. When our heart cries out *why, Lord?*, we need to grow strong in faith and believe that He knows what He is doing.

Back in John 12:27 when Jesus' heart was consumed with thoughts of the cross and He was deeply troubled in His own soul, look at what He did. He preached the truth to Himself. He clung to His heavenly Father and the things He knew were true. *Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.* Do you see the beauty of how Jesus dealt with His trouble? Rather than connecting His peace of heart with a change in His circumstances, He connected His peace with God's purposes. And that thought is the key truth for us today.

Your response must be the same. Are you nearly overcome with distress in your heart? Are you near despair? Believe in God. Believe in Christ. Remember and believe His promises. Know the truth. He has a purpose for the path He has put you on. He will glorify Himself through that path. Will you trust Him to go with you? You may ask for change and relief – even Jesus asked for the cup to pass from Him – but connect your peace of heart to His purposes, not your circumstances.

2. Understanding. *In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

While there was much that the disciples still didn't understand, Jesus gave them promises to help them have assurances.

The disciples were hearing Jesus say that He was going away and they could not follow. So Jesus told them that His departure was not abandonment. He was going away to prepare a place for them. His leaving had purpose. His crucifixion at the hands of cruel and wicked men was going to be used of God for the greatest good – our salvation.

So what can we learn from this?

First of all, nothing is too difficult for Him. No trouble you face, no problem you are confronted with, no hurt or pain is beyond His strength. Understanding this leads to a deeper faith and a greater trust.

Knowing that Jesus is now preparing a place for you – knowing that He has not abandon you in your distress – should lead you to cry out to Him.

Secondly, not only do you need to understand that nothing is too difficult for Him, but also understand that nothing is too difficult for you. Not in Christ. Look over the page at 14:26, 27. *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

Christ promises us a peace. But it's a different peace than what the world gives. The peace of Christ centers around the presence of the Holy Spirit that gives us understanding and power. So Jesus says that we are not to be afraid. Often we are troubled in our hearts because we are afraid. We are afraid how we will face the future. We are afraid of how we will manage. We are afraid that what awaits us will be bad and hard or too difficult..

But Jesus says, *do not fear*. In his epistle John wrote that *perfect love casts out fear*. If you understand how much Christ loves you, you will know that you need not fear the future. Christ will be with you. And that brings us to Christ's last solution for a troubled heart. Not only do we need to believe; not only do we need understanding; but finally we need:

3. Hope. Verse 3 gives us this promise. *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

The reality of the second coming of Christ gives us a future and a hope. Jesus is here assuring us of deliverance. Jesus is promising us a place in heaven. Perfection and completeness are what await every believer. Your future is centered around Him. *Where I am, there you will be also.* He is coming back for you.

No matter how difficult your life is now, Jesus gives you something to live for – something to long for – something to look forward to.

All of this finds its reality in the gospel. All of this is made possible because Jesus went to the cross. His suffering and death dwarf anything that you are called upon to experience. And in His death and resurrection you find all of these promises. Do you know Jesus Christ by faith? Have you trusted in Him.

If you are troubled in heart today, I urge you to look to Jesus. Believe in Him. Understand His promises to be with you. And know that deliverance will come to you. Cast yourself upon Him. He will keep you. *Let not your heart be troubled.*