

No need to fear when you know the Way \* John 14  
March 15, 2020 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

This morning's message is really a perfect demonstration of the fact that God knows what he's doing.

See, back in January, when I was putting together this sermon series, I had no idea what a coronavirus was. All I knew was that I wanted to explore the Gospel of John with you and so I matched passages to dates and passed out the schedule.

Then as you know the coronavirus became big news and then this week, the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic, the major sports leagues suspended their seasons and the government shut down schools for two weeks after March Break. The headline was right: "Take this seriously. Coronavirus is about to change your life for a while." (<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/11/politics/what-matters-coronavirus-is-about-to-change-your-life/index.html>)

So here we are, right in the midst of a troubling time, and in the sovereignty of God guess what we're looking at today: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God trust also in me." God knows what He's doing.

John 14 really helps us to think about how we respond in times like these. There is a lot of uncertainty in the world and it would certainly be easy to panic, but rather than getting carried away here, Jesus says, there's another way for us who trust in Him.

So join me in John 14 we'll see what Jesus says we should do in troubled times.

John 14:1 – Jesus, what should we do in troubled times? "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.'

How's that for succinct and to the point? In trying times, don't your heart be troubled. Don't let your mind get carried away. Don't let fear crowd out your hope but instead, remind yourself of who God is and renew your trust in Him. You know, whatever you're facing is big, but God's even bigger and He is working for good, even in this.

I find myself working this through a few weeks back when I had my appendix out. There I was, feeling quite vulnerable as I prepared for surgery and I could feel the fear of the unknown and the worry of 'what could go wrong' creeping in.

And in those moments, I realized that I had a choice – I could allow my heart to be troubled – to be filled with these feelings of fear – OR I could crowd out that fear with confidence in the goodness and power of God.

It's not always easy to do and it's a thing you have to do again and again; but Jesus tells us here – 'In trying times, you need not fear for I am with you and committed to your wellbeing.'

Max Lucado puts it like this:

What do we do with these worries? Take your anxieties to the cross—literally. Next time you're worried about your health or house or finances or flights, take a mental trip up the hill. Spend a few moments

looking again at the pieces of passion... Blood He bled for you. The spear He took for you. The nails He felt for you... He did all of this for you. Knowing this, knowing all He did for you there, don't you think He'll look out for you here?

Let not your heart be troubled but trust in God; trust in Christ.

Now that in and of itself is moving, but it becomes even more powerful when you think about when Jesus said it. See, this is all happening at the Last Supper. All of John 13 – John 17 in fact takes place at the Last Supper – and so the disciples hearing it are people who have given up their lives, their homes, their livelihoods to follow Jesus; they've walked with Him and invested years of their lives in Him – and they are about to lose everything. They're dealing with the reality that Jesus will probably die, they'll probably deny Him and they'll be in danger too. (In Don Carson's words, they are on the brink of catastrophic failure).<sup>i</sup>

It's in this situation that Jesus utters these words: "Let not your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."

There is no virus so great that this doesn't apply. There is no accident so tragic that this doesn't apply. You will never in your life find yourself in a circumstance where this doesn't apply – Let not your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me.

Now from here, Jesus goes on to give us a reason why we can trust in God, why we can walk with confidence in the face of trouble. Besides the fact that God is by nature trustworthy. Maybe He sensed that His disciples were thinking – 'Well, why? What gives us confidence to calm our hearts and trust in God?'

Jesus answers that in verse 2 -

2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

3 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.

4 You know the way to the place where I am going." (John 14:2-4 NIV).

This is why we can stand firm in troubled times – our eternal destiny is secure. We can have confidence now because we have an unshakeable hope for the future.

See, Jesus here is using the imagery of 'home' to talk about eternity. "The Father's house" is eternal life. And eternal life is the presence of God. And Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for us – the Father's house, in the presence of God, for all eternity.

And not just a place, but a home. Notice, Jesus doesn't say – "I go to prepare a hotel for you" or "a cloud for you" but a home in the presence of God. What do you think of when you think of 'home?' Safety, security, family, rest. This is the way that Jesus describes eternity – not impersonal angels floating on clouds, but perfect rest in our Father's house. That's significant!

And if we are following Jesus, then there is no question that we will get there. Jesus here says "I am going ahead of you to prepare that eternal life for you." By going to the Cross, He paved the way to the

Father's house and so we who trust in Him will inevitably get there. It's already there, waiting for us to arrive.

And not only has Jesus MADE the way; He has promised to come back and get us. Right, Jesus doesn't 'ok, guys, I've built the road; no you gotta find the way' – Jesus says 'I will come back and take you there' so that where I am, you will also be.

And I think that that's reason for walking with confidence now – our future is secure.

Maybe I can put it like this – Julie has these running magazines at home and one time I was flipping through one and found this article on 'how to go for a run when you just don't want to.' If exercise from time to time, you'll know that once you get out and do it, you're going to feel good and glad to be doing it, and you'll feel even better when you've done it but... sometimes you just need a little motivation to get out there and get at it.

The author of this article suggested that one way to help with this would be to fill up a nice warm tub of piping hot water. Then, once you get out there, pounding the pavement, you're going to feel good that you're doing it, plus you can push through the aches and pains along the way knowing that there's a nice warm bath waiting for you at home. (Assuming you can get there fast enough ;)

That's kind of how this works too. This life is good and *absolutely* worth living. God has put us here to eat and drink and work and serve and love each other and to enjoy everything good thing that He has created. Sometimes, things aren't great, but by preparing a place for us in eternity, Jesus has given us the motivation to carry on, with confident and courage, knowing that there is an eternal reward waiting for us.

We can walk with confidence now because our eternity is secure.

Now let me take just a quick minute to talk about what this 'eternity' is going to look like because this passage has spawned a lot of different interpretations. The KJV translated it 'In my Father's house there are many mansions' and so that's where the picture in My Jesus I love Thee comes from – 'In mansions of glory and endless delight/I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright...'

The NIV here seems like a bit of a downgrade – 'In my Father's house, there are many 'rooms' – you kind of get the impression here that heaven is like a big building with lots of rooms, and everybody gets their own room, like a heavenly dorm or a long term care facility. But that's not it at all.

You know how in English we use the word 'house' to refer to a whole bunch of buildings, no matter how big they are? Like, a shack could be a house, a bungalow could be a house, a two level townhouse could be a house, a mansion that you put your kids in the car and drive by it on a Sunday afternoon could be a house.

Same in Greek. A 'house' can refer to a variety of places where people live. And given that there are many 'rooms' in the Father's house, this is a pretty big place. A room in Greek is not exclusively a space enclosed by four walls; a room here is literally a dwelling place. Just 'a place where you live.'

So I think that Dale Bruner is on to something when he puts it like this – “On my Father’s estate, there are many homes...” and he adds - “The Father has real estate and the people of God are en route to this most prized of possessions” (Bruner, 810).

Ultimately, I think that Jesus is saying “In my Father’s home, there’s room for all, and you will have rest and security and peace in the presence of God (where I am you will also be) and when you trust in Me, I will get you there.”

Jesus says we can still our hearts on the road of life because our destination is secure and it is good.

Well, that sounds pretty good for the disciples, but they seem a little unsure about how to get there. And so in verse 5, Thomas says –

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Thomas wants an address that he can plug into his smart phone and let Siri take over.

But Jesus says – no – Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. [I am the way to God; I am the truth about God; I am the life of God – If you want to know what God looks like in real life and if you want to get to Him, \*I\* am the Way]. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Jesus is making it clear that HE is the way to this eternal home. And if you think about what He’s just said, that makes a tonne of sense. HE is the one – the only one – who has gone ahead to prepare a place for us. He alone has paved the way for us to return to God.

We all sin, we all tell our Creator He’s not that important and that distances us from God but Jesus lived and died to be the way back to Him.

Moses didn’t die for our sins. Buddha didn’t reconcile us to God. Mohammed didn’t lay down his life for the benefit of others. Jesus alone died to win us back to God and so it is true that only HE is the way to eternal life.

Now, maybe that kind of exclusivity makes you uncomfortable. I mean, growing up, I heard a few times that religion is like a mountain and any road you take leads to the top. Or God is like an elephant being touched by blind men – they all think He’s something different. If that’s where you’re at, I get where you’re coming from.

But here’s Jesus saying ‘I’m the only One who died for His people. I’m the only one who filled in the gap between you and God. If you think that you can take any old road to the top of the mountain, you’re going to find an enormous chasm that you’ll never be able to cross, because I am the only Way that leads to eternal life.’

If Christianity was just a bunch of rules you had to follow to make you a better person then sure, it would be just like all the other religions. But it’s not. Christianity is God reaching into history to renew you and me to enable us to be the good people that He’s made us to be. It is not a dry religion for moral improvement, but a relationship with the living God. And Jesus is the only way to Him.

Gary Burge writes: “Jesus’ way is not superior because it promotes a higher ethic or because it champions values that resonate with our spiritual sensitivities. Jesus’ way is true because *in Him* we find God drawing ourselves to Him” (Burge, 408)

And when we embrace that, all of a sudden we find ourselves prepared to take on anything that comes our way. Jesus is not just some good teacher or ethical spirit; He is a living person who helps us day by day. And not only that, He promises that that day by day will ultimately lead to eternity.

And it’s for that reason that I’d sum up this whole passage like this:

There’s no need to fear when you know the Way. We need not be afraid when we know the Way.

See, the significance of Jesus being ‘the Way’ is this: He has prepared for us an eternal home and He was promised that He will get us there. He’s built the home for us to dwell in, He’s paved the road to get us there, He gives us energy to fuel our journey and He is with us every step of the way. We have an eternal home that we will reach and nothing can prevent that. Not coronavirus, not war, not tragedy, not even death. When we know ‘the WAY’ – when we know and follow Jesus – we are guaranteed an eternal home in the presence of God.

So, we need not fear when the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea as Psalm 46 says. We need not panic and fly off the handle when things go wrong. Jesus holds us firmly in place and promises us an eternal home. Trust Him in that. Be still and know that He is God as Psalm 46 also says.

Dale Bruner puts it really well, speaking from Jesus’ point of view – “I know that all these hard realities are understandably very depressing to you; but, please, don’t let your heart be too troubled... please remember the living God in whom you can trust completely; and please remember be too and my trustworthiness. Don’t give us on us... Don’t be too disheartened... Take your eyes off yourselves for a minute, off even your (relearned and rightly sobering) fallibility... My Father is here, alive and well; he is trustworthy; I am here, too, and you can trust in me. Please do!” (Bruner, 809-810).

When you know the Way, you don’t need to be afraid. Because He knows the way and He will never fail.

“Our true home, our complete security has already been built for us by him in heaven. Once we embrace the significance of this notion, our attitudes towards this world changed completely” (Burge, 407).

GO NOW IN PEACE

BENEDICTION

2 Th. 2:16-17 - Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD. (Psa 27:14 NIV).

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<sup>i</sup> Don Carson says "...these [words] were first addressed to disciples who under substantial emotional pressure were on the brink of catastrophic failure" (*Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, Pillar, 487).