

Trust * John 14

March 10, 2024 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

I know that the last few months have not been easy.

We've lost loved ones, we've been bowled over by tragedy, we've been brought low by strokes and struggles and grief. It's been a rough start to 2024.

Which is why I'm glad that I get to share with you the passage of Scripture that we are going to look at today. John 14, starting in verse 1. This is a 'word to live by' that can comfort and carry us when we need it most.

So join me in John 14, John 14, verses 1-6.

Now, before we dig in, I need to set the stage a little.

As chapter 14 begins, Jesus and His disciples are at the table, sharing the Last Supper together, when Jesus decides to break some shocking news – 13:33 – 'My little children, I will not be with you much longer.'

The disciples had always known that; they had heard Jesus say time and again that 'the Son of Man must go up to Jerusalem and rejected by the elders and die and on the third day rise again' (for example, Mark 8:34, 9:31, 10:33-34) but now I think it dawned on them – 'He really meant it. He really was going away.'

Put yourself in the disciples' shoes here. Imagine how they were feeling. The man that they had lived with, learned from, staked their life upon was leaving them. That was a pretty scary prospect. Up to this point, they had faced threats as Jesus' followers, but Jesus had always been there and He took care of things. But now He was leaving and who knows what kind of trouble that could mean for the disciples.

Think back to the very first COVID lockdown. It was four years ago next weekend. I remember the thoughts and feeling and concerns running through my head – 'How long is this going to last? How are we going to get through it? Are our lives in danger? What is going to happen to us?'

In a sense, that's what the disciples were feeling too: fear, worry, uncertainty... and knowing that, Jesus set them up to do something about it. Here's what Jesus told them to do – John 14:1 -

John 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."

In the face of utter catastrophe, Jesus tells them and Jesus tells us – 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.'

With this one memorable phrase, I think Jesus puts His finger on the issue at the heart of every trial we will ever face in life. Whatever happens, whatever goes wrong, we always have a choice. We can choose to respond with faith. Or we can choose to respond with fear. We can look at the trial and say 'this is too big for God to handle' – that's fear – or we can look at the trial and say 'God can handle this' – that's faith. And Jesus says 'Choose the latter. Choose faith.'

And look at how He says it: 'Do not LET your hearts be troubled.' He knows that as human beings our first instinct is fear. Our hearts very easily, very naturally become troubled. He knows that from experience – three chapters back at Lazarus' tomb, it says that Jesus was deeply moved in His spirit and *troubled* – that's exactly the word He uses here.

Knowing that, Jesus says – 'When things go wrong, your heart is going to try to get away from you. Do not let your heart be troubled. Do not let fear overcome your faith. But instead, trust in God and trust in Me.'

'The antidote to fear' Jesus says 'is trust.' Trust in a God who is bigger than any trial that comes along and trust in His Son who knows exactly what it's like to face that trial and is abundantly capable of helping you along the way.

'When things go wrong,' Jesus says, 'let not your hearts be troubled; trust in God and trust in me.'

Now that in itself is helpful but Jesus goes on to explain *why* we can trust in God and trust in His Son. Look at verse two:

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."

Here I think Jesus gives us two reasons why we need not fear but instead trust in Him:

1. He's gone to prepare an eternal place for us and
2. He's coming back to get us there.

He's preparing an eternal place for you and He's making sure we'll get there.

Let's look at those one at a time. First – He's preparing a place for you.

Verse 2 – "In my Father's house there are many rooms and I am going there to prepare a place for you." That means that no matter what happens in this life, your well-being is eternally

secure. 'The Father's house' is a way to describe eternity and through the Cross, Jesus went to prepare a place for you. There is a place for you in the eternal presence of God.

I'm not sure that there are literally rooms with names on the door like the *Encanto* house: 'Graham lives here,' '_____ lives here.' But I am sure that Jesus has prepared a place for us for all eternity in the presence of God and that place is home. 'There's no place like home' right? Jesus has prepared an eternal home for you in the presence of God.

How does that help us to trust in Him in the face of trials?

Well, it means that no matter what happens in this life, we have a home in the next. No tragedy, no illness, no conflict or catastrophe will leave us homeless in the next. Our place in the Father's house and our eternal security are eternally secure.

So that's the first reason to let not your heart be troubled but instead trust in God and in His Son – Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. The second reason is this – He coming back to get us there.

Verse 3 – 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you also may be where I am.'

In effect, Jesus says 'Your eternal destination is secure and I will be with you every moment of the way on the journey there.'

This is exactly like 1 Peter 1: 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ("I go to prepare a place for you")

5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time (1Pe 1:3-5 NIV). ("I will come back and take you to be with me").

He goes to prepare a place for us and returns to get us there.

That's why we can trust Him when everything falls apart. He will be with us. He will be strengthening us and carrying us along because there is nothing that can keep Him from getting us to our eternal home in the Father's house. Jesus will be with us every step of the way.

Now this saying here leads to a really interesting exchange between Jesus and Thomas.

Because Jesus says 'You know the way to where I'm going' and Thomas replies, verse 5, "Lord, we don't know where you are going so how can we possibly know the way?"

In retrospect, this is kind of cute. Thomas is looking for directions; he thinks the way is coordinates he can plug into his GPS. Jesus says 'no, the way is not directions; the way is a person and that person is Me.'

Verse 6 - Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Again, this is Jesus saying 'You can trust me because I will be with you every step of the way. I will be with you every step of the way because I AM the Way. I AM the ONE and only TRUE WAY to life – to the Father's House - and when you walk with Me, I will get you there with fullness of life on the journey and eternal security when we arrive.'

That's why we can trust Jesus when things go wrong – because He has prepared a place for us in the Father's house and He will be with us on the journey.

That's why I want to leave you with this message:

Let not your heart be troubled but trust in the Lord on the way.

Let not your heart be troubled but trust in the Lord on the way.

I wish I could tell you otherwise, but the reality of life is that sometimes things happen that stretch our faith and trouble our hearts. In those moments we have a choice – 1. give in to fear and let these things trouble our hearts or 2. trust in the life-giving Lord who leads us on the way.

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus says 'do the second one. Let not your heart be troubled. Trust in Me because I will be with you every step of the way. There may be many twists and turns, unexpected trials and thickets you really wish that you didn't have to go through, but know this: I will be with you. And because I AM the Way, I will ultimately get you to the place of eternal security that I secured for you when I laid down my life for you on the Cross.'

How do you do that? How do you stop a heart that's free-falling into fear? Max Lucado has some good ideas. He writes:

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.

Run your thumb over the tip of the spear. Balance a spike in the palm of your hand. Read the wooden sign written in your own language. And as you do, touch the velvet dirt, moist with the blood of God.

Blood He bled for you.

The spear He took for you.
The nails He felt for you.
The sign He left 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?"ⁱ

Don't let your fears get away from you but trust in the Lord on the way.

When I was looking back over my old sermon notes, I realized that not only are we almost four years removed from the first COVID lockdown, this was actually the passage that I spoke on the Sunday before everything locked down. And I think it gives us an interesting perspective from which to see this passage.

Four years ago, I stood right here and said 'Let not your hearts be troubled; trust in God and in His Son.'

Looking back over COVID, would you say that your trust was well-placed? That God showed Himself to be trustworthy? I think so.

So today I stand here and say it again:

Let not your heart be troubled but trust in the Lord on the way.

ⁱ Max Lucado, *Lucado Life Lessons Study Bible Notes*, Life Lessons: John 14:1-31 (OliveTree digital). See also Frederick Bruner - "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 me too and my trustworthiness. Don't give up 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!" (Frederick Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 809-810).