

## **Don't Let Your Hearts be Troubled**

Sometimes, I can't help but feel sorry for the disciples. Jesus said some really confusing things to them and then sometimes, he rebuked them because they didn't understand. Some of what Jesus said was a lot harder than "I am the light of the world." There were times when Jesus left kindergarten theology behind and gave them the graduate level course. And today's gospel reading is one of those times. It was Passover, the greatest holiday in the Jewish calendar, a celebration of God's love and his promises to his people. This feast should have been a happy time. But Jesus brought the disciples down. He told them that he was leaving them and that they couldn't go where he was going. When Peter protested that he was ready to lay down his life for Jesus, the Lord told him that he would deny his Savior three times before morning. That's when Jesus said the words we have before us this morning. He said,

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>You know the way to the place where I am going."*

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

<sup>8</sup> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. <sup>11</sup> Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. <sup>12</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:1-12)

Jesus was comforting his disciples. But he didn't just give them a hug and say, "Everything is going to be alright." He gave them some very challenging words that were full of God's richest promises. Those promises apply to us, too. We may not face the exact same situation the disciples did, but all of us face spiritual and physical and emotional challenges. We all know what worry feels like. So to us, too, Jesus says, **Don't let your hearts be troubled.**

### **I.**

What is the antidote to fear and worry? Trust in Christ. Trust is what this whole conversation was really about. Jesus tells us to trust that no matter what else is going on, he is going to get us home. My friends, **don't let your hearts be troubled because Jesus is the way to the Father.**

Jesus said, "**In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you.**" Have you ever seen *Downton Abbey*? It's set in this massive palace that belongs to an English lord. There are floors and floors of rooms for family and guests. You could think of heaven like that palace. It's the home of the greatest lord in the universe and he's filled it with rooms for believers to live in. There's a room there with your name engraved on a gold plate on the door. And it won't be a cheap motel room. It will be the place where God provides all that you need and you will live in joy there forever.

Jesus said, "**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.**" Remember, this was the night before he died. We often use this verse in connection with his ascension, and what Jesus says here does apply to that event. But it applies first to what was going to happen in the next twenty-four hours and in the three days that would follow. Jesus would go to his Father's house. How? The very next day he was going to be nailed to a cross and die. Do you remember what he said just before he died? "**Father, into your hands I**

**commit my spirit.”** Where did Jesus go when he died? To heaven, just like we will. But he went there not to rest from his labors like we will do. He went there to prepare a place for us.

What does that mean? Jesus died to get us into heaven. Every one of us is guilty of sin, so we shouldn't be able to get in. Hopefully, I don't have to prove that to you anymore. The reason that life hurts is that sin has corrupted the world God gave us. That sin has also corrupted our hearts. If our faith were perfect, nothing would ever trouble us. But we struggle to trust our Savior. We struggle to live for our Savior. We wrestle with guilt over and over again. That's because deep inside we know that if we stood in God's courtroom today, we would deserve to be found guilty and sent to hell. But Jesus died to give us a place in heaven. He offered his body and soul to the Father as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Because Jesus entered into the throne room of God in heaven and offered his life there as the payment for our sin, we know have the room in heaven with our name on it.

So Jesus said that if he went to prepare that place for us, he will come back and take us there. When I teach the ascension to my catechism class, I compare it to a visit from my parents. They live in California and they always fly here to visit us. And of course, my wife spends the week before they come making beds and buying groceries and preparing a place for them to stay in our house. If she does all that work, we're not going to leave them at the airport! And if Christ died to give us a place in heaven, if he rose to announce that truth, if he ascended into heaven to rule over all things until Judgment Day for our good, then, my friends, then he most certainly is going to come back to get us. Either when we die or when the world ends, our Savior will come for you and me and take us home to heaven.

So Jesus said to his disciples, **“You know the way to the place where I am going.”** That puzzled them. Thomas said, **“Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”** They didn't get that he was talking about heaven. So Jesus said, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Jesus is the way, the path that leads to God and heaven. There is only one true faith, only one way to have our sins forgiven and to avoid the punishment of hell: faith in Christ. Jesus is the truth. We live in an age that struggles with the concept of truth. Many people today believe that truth is relative – what's true for you might not be true for me. And there are situations in which that is true. But however confusing truth is in this life, there is one truth that stands above all else and applies to every human being: Christ lived and died and rose for us. So he is the life. In him we will live forever. That promise is the comfort in every difficulty that troubles our lives here. We have a better life coming in Christ.

## II.

None of that is the hard part of what Jesus was saying. The hard part comes next when he talks about his relationship with the Father. It's hard because we can't really understand how God and man are put together in the person of Christ. And the relationship between the persons in the Trinity is so far over our heads that we're like kindergarteners sitting in medical school trying to figure out what the professor is even talking about. So there will just be parts of what Jesus said that we'll turn over in our minds until we reach heaven. But Jesus did say these things to us to comfort us and we want the comfort even if we can't ever completely grasp all that he said. **Don't let your hearts be troubled because Jesus and the Father are working for us.**

Jesus said, **“If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.”** Now, the disciples understood who Jesus' Father was. That's why Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father. But they were confused by what it all meant. Jesus rebuked Philip and he told him, **“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”** This is the graduate level stuff. Jesus says that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. It's easy to misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. Some people think that there really is no difference between the persons – the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all really one and the same. God just appears in different ways at different times. But that's not what Jesus means. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. But they are one God and each person is wholly and completely God. Each person is in the others.

What Jesus is teaching us here is that the Holy Trinity is deeply concerned with our salvation. He says, **“The words I say to you are not just my own.”** They are his own, but they are not only his. **“Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”** Many times, the Bible tells us that Jesus came to fulfill his Father's plan. God the Father is the true author of our salvation. We could spend hours talking about what that might mean as far as the Son and the Holy Spirit's participation and in the end, we wouldn't be able to answer the questions that would come up. But Jesus' point is not to raise unanswerable questions. His point is to underline for us that what he was doing that night, what he was going to do the next day, what he was going to

do for them for the rest of their lives and until he comes back, was and is the work of the Holy Trinity. God Father, Son and Holy Spirit united to win eternal life for us.

That means that God Father, Son and Holy Spirit are working every day for our good. The whole Trinity wanted us to come to faith. The whole Trinity wants us to reach eternal life. The whole Trinity is engaged in our lives here as we wrestle with the good and the bad, the blessings and the hurts of life in a sinful world. Jesus calls us to believe these promises and to see the miracles that he did as confirmation of all those promises.

Then Jesus says one more graduate level thing. He says, **“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”** You know, in 21 years of ministry, I’ve never walked on water. I’ve never healed any of the hundreds of Christians I’ve visited in the hospital. I’ve never been able to feed thousands of hungry people with a little boy’s lunch. I’ve never seen any of you guys do those things either. How can Jesus say that believers – and that means you and me – will do even greater things than he was doing?

It all becomes clear when we remember the first part of what he said: we will do what he was doing. What was Jesus doing at this moment? He was teaching the gospel. He was taking the disciples deeper into the word so that they could understand it better. He was comforting God’s people in the face of hurt and sorrow. That we do every day. Every time we parents teach our children about Jesus, we are doing miracles. Every time we share the gospel with someone who doesn’t know it, personally or through our offerings, we are doing miracles. Every time we comfort believers with the message of Christ’s love, every time we prepare God’s people to face their last hours on this earth, every time we strengthen the faith of the children in our school with the good news of Jesus Christ, we do something that only God can do. Now, it isn’t really us that does it in the sense of having the power to make it happen. The power is in the word. But we do speak the word and the miracles do happen.

But how is it greater than what Jesus did? He was focused on three years of ministry. His ministry was really preparation to build the New Testament Church. That Church did not spring into existence while Jesus walked this earth. It exploded onto the scene on the day of Pentecost and then grew by leaps and bounds. When Jesus died, all the believers in the world were a tiny percentage of the people alive then. Today, Christianity is the largest religion on earth. That is what Jesus was talking about.

But it didn’t happen because we’re so great. It happened because Jesus returned to the Father and the Holy Trinity worked through our ministry for two thousand years. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are still doing that today. Whatever comfort you ever take from a sermon, whatever spiritual growth comes to you from pastors or teachers or fellow believers pointing you to Jesus, whatever success we have in reaching out and in growing in our faith, it all comes from God working in us through his word. Every moment of it is a miracle that should be impossible in a sinful world. But it is a miracle that takes place every day on this earth. That miracle will continue until our Lord returns.

Take heart in his work for you! Don’t let your heart be troubled. We live in a sinful world and many, many things will challenge our faith. But Christ will always be there for us. He will lead us to the Father in heaven – he will bring us home. Until we get there, he and his Father and the Holy Spirit will work for us, to guard us and protect us and strengthen us and comfort us. Amen.