

Jesus' Command and Comfort for Troubled Hearts
April 11, 2010 - John 14:1-6

What do you do when your heart is troubled?

How do you cope when something seriously weighs you down? Maybe it's a major decision you need to make. Maybe it's a complex problem that you don't know the answer to. Maybe a person in your life causes you great misery or trouble. It could be a health issue, a hurt issue or home issue. A troubled heart affects our smile and inner peace. It can bubble up and spill out in quiet moments when we're alone or when we're under stress. So what do you do with it?

Some of you may be very far from a troubled heart today. Life goes well right now. Or life does not go well but you have a great perspective. You're encouraged and at peace with God. Though things around you might be troubling, you're okay. Some of you came today with troubled hearts. Turmoil nibbles at the corner of your heart or maybe it overwhelms it. You hope for something from God to calm it. Does our faith "work" in troubled times? Can God really help our troubled hearts?

11 very troubled men

On a Thursday night nearly 2000 years ago, 13 men sat in an upper room: Jesus and His 12 disciples. They heard Jesus use God's divine name, I AM to declare – I am the bread of life; I am the light of the world; I am the gate for the sheep and I am the good shepherd. They heard Him tell Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life", just before He raised her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. But now they're at the Last Supper.

The Gospel writer John reveals to us that Jesus performed the menial task of washing His disciples' feet. He demonstrates to them the kind of attitude they will need to adopt in the new kingdom.

Then Jesus comes out with a stunning revelation. One of them will betray Him. Jesus says, "The one who dips his bread in the bowl with me." Judas already has his bread in the bowl. Jesus dismisses him and Judas leaves. Confused, the rest of the disciples think Judas goes to look after some official errand. But their hearts break at the thought that one of their own will betray Jesus.

Then Jesus drops another bombshell. He tells them "I will be with you only a short while longer." In other words, He is leaving them. While they come to grips with this news, he says, "Where I am going, you

cannot come though you will come later.” So there is going to be some serious separation here from the One they have given their lives to follow.

Well, Peter, who was the unofficial leader of the disciples, will have none of this. He boldly desires to follow Jesus wherever that may lead. So Peter asks, “Why can’t I follow you now? I am ready to lay down my life for you.”

You’d think this would be good news and a rah rah speech for the disciples. But Jesus’ next word shatters their remaining hope. “Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny that you even know me three times.” Certainly that prophecy was enough to subdue Peter. But think about the impact on the other disciples. If their lead disciple, the guy with the most faith, would deny Jesus, something horrific must be about to happen. If Peter would deny Christ, they could certainly do no better.

So these disciples see their world coming apart. Turmoil overwhelms their souls. Yet Jesus knows that their hearts are troubled. He did not share this news with them because he liked seeing his friends squirm. It was necessary difficult news that they needed to hear. But they would not be left alone with their troubled hearts. Jesus launches into some of the most famous commands and promises of comfort ever spoken.

Here we see God, the Son, lay out how our faith in Him can make a profound difference for our troubled hearts. Today, I want you to see Jesus comfort for our troubled hearts and our responsibility to take hold of that comfort. I want to show you that our faith does work in those troubling moments because of the One we put our faith in. I invite you to receive what He offers for your trouble today or the next time turmoil comes into your life.

Comforting by command?

Jesus’ help for His disciples’ troubled hearts begins with a command.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Notice He does not say “Let me come and untrouble your hearts. Let me remove that which troubles your soul.” Shouldn’t Jesus have said “There, there my brothers. It will be okay.” Have you ever had someone try to comfort you with those words? “Everything will be fine. It will be okay.”

I think well meaning people offer those words with a sincere heart in an attempt to comfort. But sometimes we don't really know if everything will be okay. Would we say "it will be okay" to children whose parents are on the verge of divorce? Would we say "it'll be okay" to a person with terminal cancer? Jesus could have said "everything will be okay." And He would be right according to His definition of okay. He would suffer, die, rise again, go to heaven and give the Holy Spirit to the disciples. But if I were in that room, okay to me would mean something vastly different. Okay would mean someone will betray but it won't be too serious. Peter will deny but it will be more of a joke. Jesus might go away for a little while. But He's coming back in a couple days so everything can return to normal. That definition of okay was not going to happen.

So Jesus offers them a command that if obeyed, will serve them this night and in every possible troubling moment in their lives. "Do not let your heart be troubled!"

Notice Jesus acknowledges they suffer from troubled heart. That's part of life. I love His realism here. Yes, our hearts will be troubled. But when that happens resist it. Don't just sit back and take it when something troubles us. Get involved in resisting the heart turmoil. How do we do that? We turn in faith to trusting God and Jesus. We feed our faith with truths about God and Jesus. "Trust in God. Trust also in me."

So part of dealing with troubled hearts is first acknowledging that turmoil. Then turn to God and Jesus in faith. So in that which troubles your heart today – acknowledge it. Then remain calm by trusting in God and Jesus. Remember that Jesus is bigger than all of these things. Even though you can't see the end or what God is up to, things are not beyond His control. Fight a troubled heart by cultivating faith in God. First, Jesus addresses the disciples' troubled hearts with a command.

The Hope of Heaven

Then Jesus goes on. He doesn't just leave them with the command to trust Him. He gives them reasons to trust Him. Why could the disciples and Christians here today trust Jesus?

Jesus went to heaven to prepare a place for us. John 14:2 – *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.* Jesus is preparing the eternal home for His disciples and all Christ followers. For some of you here who know you're closer to heaven than others of us, this can be a great comfort. Death may be one year or 5 years or 10 years away. But with this

promise you more senior Christians know that the Lord of the universe has been at work preparing your place. This is the same God who put all His energy and creative ability into creating the universe with its life and brilliance. This same God commits His energy and creative ability to preparing your place.

In a way, Jesus' going to prepare a place for us in paradise is the central theme of the Bible. Bruce Waltke writes "the Bible is about God bringing glory upon Himself by restoring paradise after humanity lost it through a loss of faith in God that led to rebellion against His rule." Man lost faith in God and lost paradise. Jesus prepares paradise and says have faith.

What does Jesus say here? Trust in God. Trust also in me. I go to paradise o prepare a place for you!

Why might a home in heaven not comfort us?

But for some of us, Jesus' preparation of a place for us in heaven seems to offer little comfort for our troubled hearts today. We can see the value of this comfort when we die in 30 or 50 or 70 years. But what good is this promise for trouble today?

First, the disciples faced immediate troubling of heart. They weren't going to die in a few hours. They were going through probably the worst moment of their lives. Yet, Jesus chooses to comfort them with the hope of heaven.

How could that help them in that moment? What might we be missing if we think this hope of heaven is no help today? Well, Randy Alcorn, in his book *Heaven* points out two reasons why heaven as home might not comfort us. One – We think we're already home. ***We think this world as it now is, under the curse, is our ultimate home.*** We think our houses and families and jobs and plans and possessions and vacations and retirement dreams add up to home. Even though this world is filled with sin, sorrow, sickness and suffering, we somehow think our little corner is the ultimate. Certainly there are many blessings in our lives today. C.S. Lewis – Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home. (*The Problem of Pain* – 115). But if we think we're already home, the promise of another home makes no difference. We think we've just got this life. We somehow have to make this life with its blessings and sufferings work. We can slip into living and thinking that this world under the curse is as good as it gets.

The other reason we may receive little or no comfort from Jesus' promise is *we have a distorted view of heaven*. We imagine we won't be fully human. We think our ultimate home won't be physical. We think heaven involves sitting on clouds and singing all the time. Maybe we think of it as a resort of one eternal holiday interrupted by the occasional praise service.

But listen to one of Alcorn's descriptions of heaven: *Heaven is a place we'll share with Christian loved ones, a place of fond familiarity and comfort and refuge; a place of marvelous smells and tastes, fine food, and great conversation; a place of contemplation and interaction and expressing the gifts and passions that God has given us. It'll be a place of freedom and adventure.* Alcorn – 441.

Anticipating heaven doesn't eliminate pain, but it lessens it and puts it in perspective. Meditating on Heaven is a great pain reliever. It reminds us that suffering and death are temporary conditions. Our existence will not end in suffering and death – they are but a gateway to our eternal life of unending joy. Heaven is about the future, but it has tremendous benefits here and now. If we grasp it, we will shift our center of gravity and radically change our perspective in life. This is what the Bible calls hope. Alcorn 445.

Then Jesus goes on to complete the assurance of going to heaven and being with God forever. Verse 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.” So when believers die, they enter heaven spiritually. From the glimpses of the current heaven we get in Scripture, we can gather that they receive some sort of heavenly body in which they now live. But when Christ physically returns, believers will receive a resurrection body like Jesus had when He rose. We will live in that body forever on the renewed heaven and earth in the place He has prepared for us. He's going to come back and take us there.

So, He tells the disciples He goes to prepare a place for them. He will come back and take them and us to the place. But how can we actually ensure we're going to heaven. Not everyone is going there. We need to know the way. So in verse 4 Jesus says – You know the way to the place where I am going.

For those of us who like to have a road map, so we know where we're going, the disciple Thomas was there. He's a road map guy. He does not quite get the final destination or how to get there. So he asks in verse 5. “Lord we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way.”

Jesus already told them He's going to His Father's house. So at the end of verse 6, He reminds them, the ultimate destination is God the Father Himself. We're going to be in His presence. How do we get there? John 14:6 – Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The only way to the Father in heaven is through Jesus. Here's another I AM statement. I AM the Way. Jesus doesn't blaze a way. He doesn't show us the way. He Himself is the way. So by personally trusting in Jesus as our Savior and the only Way to God we are on the way.

But how can we know that He will really get us there? He answers “I Am the truth.” Everything I speak about going to heaven and coming back to get you is true. But what about ensuring that our lives continue after we die? What about this resurrection body stuff? Can He really deliver that? I AM the life. I am the source of all life from the beginning. In Him was life. – John 1:4 I sustain all life because I am the bread of life. I have resurrection power in me for I raised Lazarus and I have authority to lay down my life and take it up again. Jesus says “by my resurrection power you will come to the Father.”

You will see Him face to face Christian. You will live forever on the renewed heaven and earth. Jesus is the life to deliver that. Everything He says is true. God ordained that through Jesus anyone could come to Him. So if Jesus can deliver us from sin and death and Satan, do you think He is worthy of your trust for whatever troubles your heart today?

If you're not a Christian here today, Jesus currently prepares no place for you in His Father's house. But trust in Him as your Savior and Lord and turn away from sin. God's Gospel comes in. Jesus will have more work to do tonight in preparing your place. But trusting Him does not mean you're just adding the “Jesus application to your life.”

Francis Chan – “Some people encounter Jesus and say, “Sweet!” Jesus come join the party of my life with this sin, that addiction, this destructive relationship, and we'll just co-exist together. But repenting means saying, “Sweet Jesus, You are the best thing that has happened to me! I want to turn from all the sin and selfishness that rules me. I want to let go and walk with You. Only You. You are my life now. Help me to walk away from the enslaving worthless things in life.”

Christians, take up the fight against the trouble in your soul. Trust in God and this Jesus. Cultivate a heart for your ultimate home – heaven.

I am the way and the truth and the life.

I am the way to God: I did not come
 To light a path, to blaze a trail, that you
 May simply follow in my tracks, pursue,
 My shadow like a prize that's cheaply won.
 My life reveals the life of God, the sum
 Of all he is and does. So how can you,
 The sons of night, look on me and construe
 My way as just the road for you to run?
 My path takes in Gethsemane, the Cross,
 And stark rejection draped in agony.
 My way to God embraces utmost loss:
 Your way to God is not my way, but me.
 Each other path is a dismal swamp, or fraud.
 I stand alone: I am the way to God.

I am the truth of God: I do not claim
 I merely speak the truth, as though I were
 A prophet (but no more), a channel, stirred
 By Spirit power, of purely human frame.
 Nor do I say that when I take his name
 Upon my lips, my teaching cannot err
 (Though that is true). A mere interpreter
 I'm not, some prophet-voice of special fame.
 In timeless reaches of eternity
 The Triune God decided that the Word
 The self-expression of Deity,
 Would put on flesh and blood – and thus be heard.
 The claim to speak the truth good men applaud.
 I claim much more: I am the truth of God.

I am the resurrection life: It's not
 As though I merely bear life-giving drink,
 A magic elixir which (men might think)
 Is cheap because thought lavish it's not bought.
 The price of life was fully paid: I fought
 With death and black despair; for I'm the drink
 Of life. The resurrection morn's the link
 Between my death and endless life long sought.
 I am the firstborn from the dead; and by
 My triumph, I deal death to lusts and hates.
 My life I now extend to men, and ply
 Them with the draught that ever satiates.
 Religion's page with empty boasts is rife:
 But I'm the resurrection and the life.

(From D.A Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus*, (Baker, 1980, p. 29-30).