

## **“Troubled Hearts” – John 14:1-14 – May 10, 2020**

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This passage of scripture from John’s gospel is often used during funerals because it is a passage that contains a beautiful image of a heavenly home and words of assurance in times of trouble and grief. As Jesus is preparing his disciples for the future – a time without him physically present in their lives – he wants to leave them with something that will provide comfort to them in their grief. Something they can hold onto when the situation seems to be without hope and when the path forward is anything but clear. In these strange times we can recognize the need for the familiar and the comforting when that which we thought secure and unchangeable has become anything but.

As Jesus shares with his friends the news that he is leaving them, they ask him questions that seem to want him to clarify what he is saying. Thomas asks – “What do you mean, we don’t know where you are going? How can you say we know the way? We don’t know the way!” And Phillip says to Jesus, “Just show us the Father, then, then everything will be okay.” One of the commentators I was studying, David Lose, said that these questions point to an even deeper question that the disciples are struggling with in that very moment. It’s like a stall tactic, to keep him from continuing his farewell speech. It’s like calling a time out before things go too far. The deeper question the disciples have is why. Why are you leaving us? Why do you have to go away, can’t you just stay here with us? We don’t want to imagine a life, a future, without you in it.

It’s funny that Jesus begins this conversation with the directive, do not let your hearts be troubled, because what he is about to tell them is going to literally trouble their hearts. It’s kind of like when you’re about to tell someone something, and you start by saying, “Now, don’t be upset.” You immediately know that whatever they’re going to tell you will be upsetting. It’s a foreshadowing of the emotional response you’re about to be experiencing. And like any typical human being these disciples don’t want to have troubled hearts. So stop right where you are Jesus, no more of this saying goodbye to us, let’s just get back to normal, and we’ll forget you even said anything.

This may be similar to what we have been seeing and hearing from so many people as we are several weeks into living life in the pandemic. The push back, the demonstrations, and people clamoring to get back to normal. Open up the states, let people get back to work, we don’t like where this is going. It’s really scary, and it’s already gone far enough. We want things to be normal again, because we cannot

handle any more bad news. We are afraid of what might happen as this non-normal situation continues into the future.

Jesus understood the fears of the disciples, and as much as he wished for them that things could stay the same, or go back to normal, nothing ever does. Change is inevitable. Heartache is a natural part of life. And when we allow ourselves to love, we open ourselves to the possibility of grief. Jesus calmed their fears by giving them something to believe in, and someone to trust. Himself.

“It’s okay Thomas, I am the way. Follow me, follow where I lead you, and you will always stay on track. The way might get tough at times, in fact, it will get tough, but keep following me, and you will know the truth, and in me, you will have life. Look at me Philip, if you’ve seen me, you’ve already seen the Father. You want to know what God is like? Look at me. You want to know, does God care about you? You know I care about you, so does the Father. Trust in me, because the Father and I are one. As I love you, the Father loves you.”

When the way is tough, Jesus speaks to us saying, do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. Life has always been full of change, now more than ever before. Each day brings new changes. Each day may also bring new fears, new concerns. But with each day will also come the promises of God in Jesus Christ, and with them the hope and the assurance that our place is forever secure in God, no matter what.