

Let not your hearts be troubled

John 14:1-14

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We are going to begin a series of sermons over the next weeks as we prepare for Easter. These particular sermons are going to come out of the Gospel of John chapters 14 through 16. These chapters are known as the farewell discourse. Why is it called the farewell discourse? It is called that because Jesus is about to leave his disciples. These are the last words that he says to them before he is arrested. Jesus never wasted words, but during his last few hours with his disciples, he shares some of the most important things they need to know to be prepared for his death and departure to heaven to be with God.

Today we are going to look at Jesus' words as they occur in the Gospel of John, chapter 14:1-14. Though it might seem that Jesus jumps around from topic to topic, there's really one flowing thought throughout these 14 verses. Jesus is concerned because his disciples were troubled by his departure. Therefore, he begins with a simple set of commands:

“¹ Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”

At first glance, it sounds as if Jesus is commanding his disciples to suppress their sadness. Stop being sad! But emotions cannot be commanded and that is not what Jesus is doing. He's teaching us something much more important. It might look like Jesus is giving them three different commands: 1. Let not your hearts be troubled. 2. Believe in God. 3. Believe also in me. But the three commands are really one command. It could be said this way: *Let not your hearts be troubled and the way to do that is by believing in God and also in me.* The cure for a troubled heart is a new perspective. The disciples had walked and talked with Jesus, but they needed to be reminded that God is in control. They needed faith to calm their troubled hearts. I also need faith to calm my troubled heart. I am a person who battles with anxiety. I can get sick or even depressed because of a troubled heart. When I am feeling that kind of heart, all I desire is for God to take away the thing, person or circumstance that is troubling me. God is so good to me because he is teaching me that what I need is not a change of circumstance at all. What I need is God's perspective on the same old circumstance. I need to see the problem through God's eyes. I need faith. I need to believe. Faith is seeing problems from God's perspective. I am learning to do that, just as these disciples were learning. So how does Jesus encourage them? The rest of these verses are four reasons to have a new perspective on Jesus' departure:

1. Jesus' departure is going to prepare a place for them to be with Jesus forever (v. 2-3).
2. Jesus' departure creates a way between people and God (v. 4-6).
3. They should believe Jesus because he is God in human flesh (v. 7-11).
4. Jesus' departure is going to create new possibilities for them in prayer (v. 12-14).

1. Jesus' departure is going to prepare a place for them to be with Jesus forever

"² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

The original language that John recorded his Gospel in is Greek. The most famous translation into the English language is called the King James Version of the Bible. We at IBC use the English Standard Version. However, the King James Version of the Bible translates, *"In my Father's house there are many mansions."* The word "mansions" has led to some creative art and music. One famous hymn has a chorus that says, *"I have a mansion just over the hilltop in that bright land where we will never grow old."* As the understanding of the ancient Greek language progressed, it became clear that "mansion" was a mistranslation. The original Greek word simply means a place to live, without reference to the size or quality of the place. That is why the ESV that we use calls it a room. There is quite a lot of difference between a mansion and a room. "Mansion" can be a very distracting translation, because if you're not careful, you will begin to focus on the kind of house Jesus will provide, instead of what Jesus himself emphasizes. Read the verses again and ask yourself, what exactly is Jesus emphasizing? *"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."*

Jesus is telling his disciples that his departure will separate them for a time, but it will bring them together forever. The verse is about the relationship Jesus has with his disciples and what it means to be together forever with him. If we are not careful when we talk about heaven, we can focus on the streets of gold or the fact that there will be no more sickness. We can emphasize that there will not be war and that there will be racial justice. We can speak of living in a world that has no sin. All these are true and good reasons to rejoice for sure, but if you have all of these things and do not have Jesus, you do not have heaven. Do you know what it is to be in the presence of God? Do you know what it is to feel your soul penetrated by his presence? Can you say with David, *"better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere."*? There is a misconception in our day in time that heaven is for good, perfect people, and that hell is for bad people who murder and rape. Repeatedly, in the Bible, God talks about heaven is the place for those who love God and want to live with him forever, and hell is the place for those who do not care about God and do not desire to be in his presence. You will never go to heaven if you do not have a relationship with God on Earth. To be in God's house is to be a friend of God. God has made a way for that to be possible.

If you're here today, God is inviting you into a close personal relationship with Him. He's inviting you to put your faith and trust in him. I am not talking only to non-Christians, but like Jesus, I am talking to Christians and to myself. God doesn't care what you do for him, if you do not love him. He is not impressed with our gifts, money, or good intentions. Heaven is for those who have a relationship with God and Jesus dies to make that possible.

2. Jesus' departure creates a way between people and God

"⁴ And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The disciples are still fixated on the fact that Jesus is leaving them. He tells them that they know the way to where he is going. Their minds are always focused on being with him. They think Jesus is talking about some sort of roadmap to another physical location in the world. Thomas asks a good question: If we don't even know where you're going, how can we know the way? Jesus responds with one of the most stunning statements about himself in the New Testament. *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* This might be one of the most important verses in all of the Bible.

The entire world can be separated into two groups. Those who believe that Jesus is the way to the Father and those who do not. Do you believe that about Jesus? We live in a day and time in which this statement gets Christians accused of being bad people. With anger and even hatred, people say, "Do you really think you have the only right religion? Do you really believe that billions of people around the world don't know the way to God?" "You are so arrogant. You think that you are right and everybody else is wrong." You can watch these kinds of conversations on every major social media platform.

So how do you answer a person who talks like that? First is to see through the faulty thinking. The claim that it is arrogant to think you are right is coming from a person who thinks they are right. They are doing what they are accusing you of doing. Second, understand that what Jesus is saying is practical. If your doctor tells you that you have cancer and that the only way to be cured is to have surgery, do you get angry and call him arrogant? Of course not. In the same way Jesus is being practical. You will never be good enough on your own to get into God's house. You need God's Son to die in your place and pay your sin debt so that you can be with God. Practically speaking there is no other way. Calling these kinds of statement rude or arrogant is our culture's way of dismissing Jesus. But I warn you that if you dismiss Jesus, you are making a very risky move. Do not gamble with your eternity. Shouldn't you try and find out if this is true? If Jesus is the way and you need to find him? How could that calm a troubled heart? The disciples should be at peace with Jesus's departure, because it's the only hope for the world. The disciple's desire to be with Jesus now is earthy and selfish, God's plan for them is eternal and loving. God's way is better. Do you believe that God's plan is truly better than your plan? What if that plan means that you will be in pain? What if that plan is hard and dark at times, will you still believe? If you are here today, rest assured that God's plan is much better than yours for your life. If you can believe that, then your perspective will change.

3. They should believe Jesus because he is God in human flesh

"⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do

not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."

Who is Jesus? That may be the most important question you ever answer. Is he just a Jewish carpenter from the first century, or is he the son of God who came from God to save the world? Is he the archangel Michael as a famous cult claims? Is he one of many gods over their own planet as another cult claims? Or is he just a good teacher as secular historians would say? For the first four centuries of church history there raged a debate over who Jesus was. These verses must be considered, if we are to answer the question biblically. Jesus says whoever has seen him has seen God the Father. I do not want to spend a great amount of time today trying to explain the nature of Jesus. I'll just state it in very simple terms. Jesus is one person with two natures. Jesus is 100% man and 100% God at the same time in one person. The disciples have troubled hearts and they need reassurance. How does Jesus reassure them? He reminds them that the one they are speaking with is the very one who created them. He reminds them that they can trust him.

Did you know that like the disciples, your trials, problems and troubles will actually lead you in one of two directions? First, like the disciples, when we get a problem, we can forget who our God is. We forget who Jesus is. The problem becomes giant and unstoppable, and God in our mind becomes distant and inactive. But that is not true. We do not need a new god, we need faith in our God. That is the second way: Did you know that if you approach trials, problems and troubles with faith, it will help you to know God in a greater way? You will never know his comfort until you know terrible fear. You will never know his peace until you have a troubled heart. You will never know his healing power until you have been sick. You will never know his ability to save people until you have witnessed it. If you walk with God in faith, your trials will become the greatest tool to help you know God. May God remind your troubled heart that his words never fail. May God remind you that his power is always enough. May God fill you with his Holy Spirit. May God grant you the grace to see through his eyes. May he bless you by revealing himself to you in the middle of your trials. May his light shine in your darkest moments. May you be blessed like the disciples who could see who Jesus really is.

4. Jesus's departure is going to create new possibilities for them in prayer

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

To understand these last verses, we have to understand which "works" Jesus is talking about. What does he mean when he says, *"whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do"*? Does he mean works like miracles? That would mean that we will raise the dead, cast out legions of demons, speak to the wind and the waves and a host of other miraculous things that Jesus did. The apostles themselves did not even do most of these things "greater" than Jesus, so I do not believe that explains this passage well. One theologian says this:

"Might "greater" mean "more numerous" or "more widely dispersed"? In that sense, Christians have indeed done "greater" things than Jesus did. We have preached all around the world, seen

millions of men and women converted, dispensed aid, education, and food to still more millions. The "greater" works may therefore be the gathering of converts into the church through the witness of the disciples and the overflow of kindness that stems from transformed lives."

How have the disciples throughout history done these greater works? They are doing it through the empowerment of prayer. If you pay close attention, there is a condition Jesus places on this prayer. In verse 13 Jesus says, *"Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do."* What does it mean to ask in Jesus name? Many people believe this is just to finish their prayers saying "in Jesus name". If that were true, it would mean that if we did not finish by saying "in Jesus name", God might not answer our prayers. But this cannot be what it means, because we have recorded prayers from the apostles they do not end without the phrase "in Jesus name". There's nothing wrong or sinful ending your prayer by saying "in Jesus name", but it is not a magical phrase. It's not like I can ask for anything I desire and say "in Jesus name", and I will receive it. God gives me a jumbo jet in Jesus name. That is not what he is saying. To do something in someone's name is to do it through them as their representative. Jesus has made it clear that he is the way to God. If that is the case, then to pray in Jesus name is to pray through Jesus to God. In other words, when you are a disciple of Christ who is saved by faith in Christ, your prayers are through Jesus. Also, to pray in Jesus name is to pray as Jesus' representative or ambassador on Earth. If I tell you that I come in the name of the Prime Minister of Spain, you understand that I am meaning that I represent him. Can you imagine if your prayers stop being the things you desired, and began to be the things Jesus desired? It is OK to ask God to do many things in our lives that might seem selfish. But do not be surprised when he does not answer you. God knows what's best for us. He desires that our hearts would be so in love with him that our prayers would be what he desires. Would you like to see God answer your prayers like never before? Stop focusing your prayers on God making your life easier here on Earth, and start praying that God would be glorified in your life and that Jesus name would be magnified through everything you do.

It's interesting that throughout my years of serving God and ministry, the times that I am the most happy are not the times that I get what I want. I have discovered that my happiness is greatest when I see God being loved by others. It is when people fall in love with the God who has changed my life. Stop for a second and think about what I am about to say: Happiness is smoke, not fire. What I mean is that happiness is an effect of something else. If you want to get a lot of smoke, you should not seek after smoke. You should start a fire. In the same way, if you want to be really happy, you should not seek happiness. Seek Jesus with all your heart and I promise you that the happiness will come. How does prayer affect our troubled hearts? As we come close to God in prayer, his reality overwhelms our reality. His perspective overwhelms our perspective. His love for others becomes our love for others. As we pray miracles can happen.

I want to tell you the story that happened to me when I lived in the country of Colombia. It is a story about the power of prayer and God's desire to glorify his name. The Baptist Mission had given my family the task of reaching out to several groups of indigenous tribes in southern Colombia that have little or no understanding of the gospel. One of those tribes was the Yucuna. This tribe had had Bible translators for close to 40 years when my family arrived. The translators had worked very hard to translate parts of the Bible into the indigenous tribal language and to try to share the gospel with them. Sadly, they had seen no one come to faith in Christ in 40 years. It was very discouraging for the missionaries.

When we arrived, we did not understand much about how to do missions with such difficult peoples, and so we did what any weak person would do. We began to cry out to God. We believed that God wants to glorify His name in every people, tribe, and nation. So we began to beg him that he would do that amongst these people. One day a woman came to my house and knocked on the door. She wanted to let us know that one of the most important elders of her tribe was sick and dying in the hospital. She asked if I would go to the hospital and pray for him. As my wife and I had been praying for God to do an amazing thing amongst these tribal people, we truly believed that this might be the opportunity to see God do a miracle and get their attention. I went to the hospital. As I arrived there, I got on my knees, and I begged Jesus for his own name and his own glory that he would rescue the life of this man, Ramiro, and everyone would know that it was God who did it, and not a spirit or witchdoctor. Ramiro never got up that day. I went home to my room and begged God to please do something to make his name famous. After a couple of hours, I was at peace that God would act, and I went about my business as normal.

One month later, Ramiro came to my house to tell me what happened to him. He told me that when he was in the hospital, he died and he had seen a bright light that looked like a man. He was afraid and asked the light in his mother tongue (a language that only 1,000 people in the world speak) if the light man knew the way to reach all of his dead loved ones. He said that the man of light responded, *"I am Jesus and I am the only way. I am giving you a second chance to live so that you can tell your people that they must come to me if they want to live forever."* Ramiro went back to his people and told them about Jesus. He used all of the material that the Bible translators had worked so hard to produce. Today there are Christians in his tribe. In the end, God's plan for the salvation of his people was far greater than any of our plans. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Jesus.

Discussion questions:

1. What would be one thing you would tell your own children before you died?
2. In verses 2-3, Jesus speaks of taking the disciples to be home with him forever. Are you aware of any God or any religion that has ever existed in which God was planning to build a home to live forever with his people? Why is Christianity such a different religion? Why is our version of heaven so different?
3. Jesus says that he is the way, the truth and the life, that no one comes to the Father except through him. How would you explain this idea to someone who does not understand it?
4. When we face difficulties and trials, we have a chance to know God in a greater way. Can you explain how that might happen?
5. Can you tell of a time in which God answered your prayers?
6. What do you think it means to pray in Jesus' name?
7. Is there anything, from this passage, that God spoke to you about that you would like to share with someone else?