

Intro - Open to John 14

Who is the rock of your family? Or when things get difficult to whom do you turn? These people are God's gift to us. We need the competent and steadfast people who are blessing to us in times of difficulty. It's the reason I am thankful for my Dad who has been caring for his Mom as she is passing away and my Grandfather as he is mourning. Their move out of their home, my Mama into memory care with dementia, and now her departure to heaven have been challenging. My Dad has been steadfast through it all. The process of losing a loved one is not easy.

In our text this morning, the disciples were being confronted with the reality of Jesus' departure. They weren't even fully comprehending it, they were confused and concerned and their responses will continue to roll in as we go through these next few chapters.

Jesus was headed to death but he is steady even when he is headed toward torture. It should be the disciples comforting him, but he is God, so he comforts us. Even today, there is comfort from Jesus for you. Let our hearts believe in his exclusive salvation which prepares our home in heaven. We will look together this morning as Jesus comforts us in our heart, in our heavenly home, and in Himself.

- **Comfort in our Heart**

John 14:1

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

The concern and confusion of the disciples produces this incredible response from Jesus.

Remember two weeks back, in the preceding verses, Peter and the others complain that Jesus is leaving and they cannot follow. In fact, Peter is in denial about this and claims that he would never let this happen. He would follow Jesus even into death. But how does Jesus answer, *"Truly, Truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times"*... Jesus tells Peter, not only will you not die for me, you will deny me. A denial Jesus will redeem after his resurrection.

But in response to all this worry, he tells his friends, his disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled." This phrase has given Christians hope from the moment it was uttered. It is not a threat like a nagging parent, "do

not let your hearts be troubled, or else". No, it is a loving invitation but still a command to actively refuse disappointment, embarrassment and fear concerning Jesus' departure. It is a command into confident hope and trust in God and in himself. This is where he goes next, "Believe in God; Believe also in me". Trust in God, and by extension as God in the flesh, Trust in me.

My hope that you will see this morning that there is no better place for your hearts to go. Where can you take your worry and anxiety? God. True belief, trust in God is the true remedy to worry. Peter and Paul reinforce this in their letters to the churches of the 1st century:

1 Peter 5:7

"casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

Philippians 4:6-7

"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

It has been a difficult few weeks for my family as my grandmother Margo has been passing away. Seeing your grandfather cry over a video call is not fun. Being geographically separated from them has honed my understanding of true comfort. I do not tell Papa it will be alright. This time will pass. No platitude will do. I remind him of the hope we have. That God is our help in time of trouble. That Mama will be away from the body and with the Lord. I do not even trust that me or my dad or his pastor will be enough to help with the pain. He cannot cast his cares on me. We do not guard our hearts in our pastor. We believe in God as the remedy. All other comforts are either a means to receive comfort from God or it is a replacement for God, which cannot deliver. The Christian must see God as the source of our comfort. He steadies our hearts through belief in Him.

In the disciples' distress of his leaving, his dying, Jesus comforts them. Even when he leaves, believe in him. So now he turns to where he is going. He goes to work for us. What will Jesus be doing? He is going away to prepare our new home. He will comfort us in our Heavenly Home.

- **Comfort in our Heavenly Home**

John 14:2-4

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? 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. And you know the way to where I am going."

Now Jesus shows why he is leaving. He describes his destination. His father's house, the dwelling place of God, the place Jesus will go to after his death and ascension. This is heaven.

We get further descriptions of heaven in John's Revelation, with this new Jerusalem covered in gold and precious stones. Beautiful beyond belief. Notice that when Jesus describes heaven here, he doesn't focus on its beauty. He focuses on the proximity of the accommodations to God himself. In Jesus' coming absence from the disciples, he wants them to believe in God and himself that his absence will be short lived. He leaves so that there to never be absence again. The distance will be vast for a moment, but it will be intimate for all of eternity. An intimacy that can be shared with an unlimited number of people.

My grandfather Ray will miss Margo immensely. It may feel to him as if the sun has set and will never rise again. 68 years of marriage does that to a heart. The distance will feel insurmountable, a distance that has begun to grow with her Dementia the last few years. Papa has gone from the one with health problems being cared for to the one who has given all his strength to care for her. He loves his wife like Christ loves the church. Jesus loves with a greater love than this. Papa can't die for Mama. He can't bring her back; he can't bring her home. Jesus can, and has. He has escorted Mama to his Father's house, where her mind is restored and her pain is no more. But more than that, Mama gets Jesus. That is why we sing, In Christ Alone "And as he stands in victory, Sin's curse has lost its grip on me. For I am his, and He is mine, Bought with the Precious Blood of Christ."

Notice how often Jesus talks about himself. *"I have told you, I go to prepare, I go and prepare, I will come again, take you to myself, where I am, where I am going."* The heavenly house is not to be marveled at for its opulence. We shouldn't be excited about getting out of our small homes on earth to our mansions in heaven. We should be excited that the distance between us and Jesus will be removed by Jesus' work.

Jesus is comforting his disciples that their home will be with him. So now we can turn to a passage that I wrestled with in verse 3: What does it

mean that Jesus will come again and take you to himself? Is this referencing the rapture? Is this a reference to his second coming? Well one of the rules of interpretation is to consider that the meaning cannot be different than what it would mean for the original audience. Does this mean that Jesus will return to rapture the disciples? We know that they die by martyrdom or in John's case by old age. So, they are not raptured. What about the second coming? Well since that has yet to occur, the disciples aren't there for that either.

We can be certain that these two comings of Jesus for his church and to reign on the earth are certain but this text is not the place to determine that. I am inclined to think that this comforting work by Jesus is that in their death Jesus will be the one who returns for their soul to usher them to heaven. The place God has prepared for them. He is the way to heaven, his presence, the presence of God himself.

Now the particulars of how that works is not exactly my point. Whether Jesus sends and oversees the angels work or if he handles it himself, it's the personal touch that is the point. He prepares our place, he comes again, we will be with him.

He ends these verses saying that they know the way to come to him. The coming grief and confusion over why he even has to die prompts Thomas to speak up for the group. Jesus answers with the comfort we have been hinting at all along. We started with Comfort in our Heart, Comfort in our Heavenly Home and now all of this is Comfort in Himself.

• **Comfort in Himself**

John 14:5-6

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

Thomas says what the disciples are all thinking: "I don't know the way! How can we know?" When Thomas asks his question, he is asking for guidance. For a map to be revealed. As if Jesus was not truly departing the world but would just be going into a foreign land. Thomas wants the path to this destination. But this ignores all the times Jesus just said he is dying, he is leaving them, and that they will abandon him. But ignorant of all that, Thomas is desperate for the directions to God's address.

So now to Jesus' answer. His 6th statement of "I AM" here in John.

He doesn't just provide an answer, he is the answer. He doesn't text them an address. True to his dealing with their Heart and his preparation of their heavenly home: He Himself is the answer. He is our comfort, he is our home, he is our way. The death of Jesus is his means of salvation for his elect, it was the way to prepare their places in heaven. His sacrificial death is the preparing work for our rooms in heaven. It is not as if Jesus grabbed his tool belt or duster to prepare the rooms. His dying made the way for us to be able, through the sinless son of God, to access those rooms.

When Jesus says he is the way, the truth, and the life, he is not splitting his answer into three equal parts. Thomas asks for the way, Jesus answers that he is the way. As the way, he is the way to truth and life. Jesus' way is not a false hope, it is not just a way to live before you die. It is true to reality and it leads to life everlasting. And I hope you know, like we talked about last week that life in Jesus is not just hoping to go to heaven, it is the real life based on truth in God.

Now if we just stopped there, almost anyone would want Jesus. If you can just have a way to heaven, a way to truth and life that you just add onto your life, why not say, yeah I will take a little Jesus. This is the biggest lie in America today. That Jesus can be tamed to be used.

Jesus claims his way is exclusive. Jesus says "No One!!! Comes to the Father except through me". The disciples, and us may be tempted when life is hard to seek another way, but Jesus is clear, there is none. Paul says to the young pastor Timothy:

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

This echoes all the way back to the prayer, The Shema, of Deuteronomy 6, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." An exclusive claim backed up in the first commandment, "you shall have no other God's before me." A jealous God, for the glory of his name who has now revealed his mediator.

If there was any reason to think there was another way, then it wouldn't be through Jesus. He claims exclusivity. If there are other ways, the exclusivist Jesus wouldn't be one of them. This is what confuses me about Christians who say, "Everyone will be saved. But I choose to follow

Jesus." Well Jesus said that no one can be saved except through him. If I were them, I would just choose another way entirely. Jesus isn't interested in being twisted that way. His words denounce that possibility.

You also can't deny the exclusivity of Christ if you consider the way Jesus dies. Why would God die if it is was just one possible way to heaven? Why would he be tortured if it is was just one way of many to heaven? The reason for all the blood and sacrifice is that only blood covers sin. This is the way God has always forgiven sinners. Under the Old Testament:

Hebrews 9:22

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

The comforting Jesus, the comforting God offers one way. He says to be comforted in your heart and your heavenly home because it is all in Himself. You can face Jesus' death because of this. You can face any death because of this. You may be facing death yourself. You may have to face the death of a loved one like I am. Death is a fearsome prospect, but Jesus conquered it.

2 Timothy 1:10

our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Jesus, in the midst of your pain, has gone ahead of you. He experienced the pain of his earthly father Joseph dying when he was young. He experienced his friend Lazarus dying where he wept at his grave. He would experience death himself but he came to life again so that we may have life.

Brothers and Sisters, don't be confused here and walk away this morning thinking: What a powerful phrase Jesus spoke. I hope I can hold on to that and maybe just maybe it will make my day brighter. Jesus didn't leave his disciples to die to make their day brighter or boost their self-esteem. He comforts them and us that his death is the way. **Your heart is cared for, your heavenly home is secured, in the only way it can be: In Himself.**

This is how he cares for you. A deep care that cannot be clouded out, cannot be diminished, it cannot fail.