

Let your hearts not be troubled

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[0 : 00] Let's also pray. Let's ask God for his help. Gracious Father, as we come to your word, we ask for your light.

Open our minds to understand and our hearts to receive what you are saying to us. Holy Spirit, be our teacher. Take what belongs to Christ and make it known to us.

Where we are uncertain, give us faith. Where we are slow to believe, make us ready to trust your promises. Lift our eyes to the Father that we may know you through your Son and believe that you are at work in us and through us.

We pray all this in the name of Christ. Amen. I wonder if you've ever unexpectedly lost access to something, if you've ever suddenly been cut off.

So maybe you're in a foreign country, but all of a sudden you can't access that banking app you need. Or maybe you've tried to enter a concert venue and they keep telling you your ticket isn't valid.

[1 : 11] It isn't a nice feeling when that happens, is it? Now let us up the stakes a little bit. Have you ever lost access or been cut off from someone?

It's happened to me. Now this isn't in a church context, but there is someone whom I used to work with who for some reason dropped out of the team that we were both part of and suddenly avoided all contact.

This person didn't return any of my text messages or calls or indeed any of the other team members. To use the language of Gen Z, they ghosted me.

And the whole experience left me feeling anxious, uncertain, apprehensive. Perhaps you've experienced what I have too.

Perhaps even more so because you've lost access to your siblings or your children because of a relationship breakdown. Now let's up the stakes a little bit more.

[2 : 20] Have you ever felt you've lost access to God himself? Been worried that you've been cut off from him? Perhaps life has just been so overwhelming and there's just been so much going on and as you try to deal with all that, you kind of felt like the Lord has gone away.

You're just trying to juggle stuff and you're feeling burdened because the Lord seems absent. And you are kind of worried.

What if he's gone? What if I did something that made me lose access to him? Maybe I didn't pay my debts, so now I'm cut off?

And your heart is deeply troubled. In today's passage, the disciples are deeply troubled. Already from last week, things are looking ominous.

They're having dinner, but Jesus has mentioned someone is going to betray him. And that traitor, who at this stage seems to be known only to Jesus and John himself, has left the room.

[3 : 33] And John says, end of verse 30, And it was night. And he seems to be talking about more than merely what time it is.

Things are getting dark. And they only get darker. For Jesus now says to them, verse 33, My children, I will be with you only a little longer.

Where I am going, you cannot come. What an absolute bombshell for the remaining disciples. Jesus, you're leaving?

Just like that? And what do you mean we can't come with you? It's a bit like that scene at the end of The Lord of the Rings. Frodo and Samwise, the two hobbits and best friends, who have journeyed together for so long, are on one last trip, when they arrive at a calm, almost otherworldly harbour, the Grey Havens.

And when one of their friends says, This is the end of the fellowship, it certainly begins to dawn on Sam, Frodo is going off.

[4 : 52] He's leaving Sam behind. And as much as Sam might long to go with Frodo, he can't follow. Not yet.

That's where the disciples are at. This is their leader, the one they've journeyed with for so long. And back in 8 verse 21, when he was speaking to his Jewish opponents and telling them, Where I go, you cannot come, they were probably inwardly cheering for him.

But now, they are in shock. Because Jesus is now telling them the same thing. So of course they must protest.

Just look at the exchange between Peter and Jesus in verses 36 and 37. Simon Peter asked him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied, Where I'm going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Isn't that just so like Peter? Passionate and impulsive.

[6 : 08] And don't you just love him for being so Peter? Because you can't help but feel this man loves Jesus.

Which is why Jesus' response in verse 38 is so shocking. Then Jesus answered, Will you really lay down your life for me?

Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times. So just think about all the stuff the disciples have to deal with right now.

They just heard last week that one of their number is going to be a traitor. And now they hear Peter too is going to disown Jesus.

Their rock and their spokesman is going to betray him or deny him three times. So in that moment, Peter is no more deserving of Jesus' love than Judas.

[7 : 14] And if you are one of the disciples, surely you must be wondering, if at least two of us are choosing to turn our backs on Jesus, how does Jesus feel about that?

You see, all thanks to verse 38, the problem isn't just that they seem to be losing access to Jesus. It's that Jesus now seems to have every right to withdraw access from them. No wonder their hearts are troubled.

They have every reason too. And do you feel like that sometimes? Do you also sometimes feel like not only is Jesus absent, but maybe deep down, given how sinful we can be, Jesus has every right to be absent.

And your heart is troubled. Well, my friends, if that is you, then hear the words of John 14 verse 1.

[8 : 39] Do not let your hearts be troubled. That is what God wants to say this morning. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Now hear what God isn't saying.

He's not saying, don't worry, be happy, as if this is all about positive thinking. No, for Jesus goes on to say, you believe in God, believe also in me.

In other words, Jesus is saying, don't feel unsettled, don't be disturbed, instead, take me at my word.

Like you take God at his word. Rest your future on my shoulders. Find your footing in the promises I make. Because here is the reality Jesus is about to unfold for them.

His departure doesn't cut them off from God. It is the very thing that secures their access to God.

[9 : 50] That's the surprising but good news we can take on board this morning. This morning, Jesus will say, don't be troubled, because in Christ you have, number one, access guaranteed, number two, the way opened, number three, the Father revealed, and number four, the kingdom extended.

So let us hear what Jesus says and find a greater assurance than we could ever imagine. So firstly, in Christ, you have access guaranteed by Jesus' going.

You see, up to this point, Jesus has been waiting for his moment of glory. And if you stop to think about it, that's a bit puzzling, isn't it?

Because aren't there so many occasions where you would have thought, surely this qualifies as a moment of glory? For example, in John chapter 2, Jesus turns water into wine.

In chapter 5, he heals a paralyzed man. In chapter 6, he feeds 5,000 people with just five loaves and two fish. In chapter 9, he heals a man born blind.

[11:12] In chapter 11, he raises a man from the dead. So there are all these moments that look so glorious. And yet, all the way through, Jesus keeps saying, my hour of glory has not yet come. But finally, in verse 31, that changes. Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. So Jesus is saying, finally, it's glory time, so I have to go. because my glory can only be revealed in what I'm about to do.

But here's the big shock. That moment of glory is the cross. Now isn't that crazy?

Because whether you are a bystander, a follower, or even a Roman soldier, the cross has to look like the worst point of Jesus' life.

[12:24] I mean, excruciating pain, abandonment, my friends, mockery by your enemies. Where's the glory in that?

But Jesus says, it's the best. The moment of his greatest suffering will be the moment of his greatest glory.

Now, why would he say that? Because at the cross, we get to see what God is really like.

At the cross, we see his holiness. He does not ignore sin. We see his justice. Sin is truly dealt with. And we see his love. He bears it himself. And we don't see any one of those at the expense of the other. No, we see his holiness, justice, love, faithfulness, constancy, all at once.

[13:32] That's why God is glorified in the death of Jesus Christ. Because his character shines true. And in turn, verse 32, God will glorify his son as death is turned to life, shame is turned to joy, and defeat is turned to victory when he raises Jesus from the dead.

And even more amazingly, Jesus' cross and just, we can make our home with this loving, just, holy God.

That's what 14, verse 2 to 4 is all about. Now, don't forget the context. Jesus knows Peter is going to fail him.

In fact, all the disciples will, as will we. And to be honest, God has every right to cut ties with us in light of how we treated his son.

If Jesus wanted to ghost us, we can't blame him. Yet, in verse 2, Jesus says he is leaving, not because he is cutting ties with us, but for the very opposite reason.

[15:00] He is going instead to prepare a place for us in the Father's house. In spite of our sin, in spite of our failure, he wants us to enjoy the closest possible relationship with the Father.

Now, let's be clear, Jesus isn't saying he is an Airbnb host. I think you guys know what Airbnb is, right? You know, you put your place up for a short-term rental, and when you get a booking, you go and make sure that the room is set up properly, make sure the kettle and the tea bags are all there, that the bed is made up.

But verse 2 is not about Jesus acting as a host of a heavenly Airbnb. Airbnb. In fact, these verses are not really about what heaven is like in a physical sense.

We are on the wrong track if we get fixated on that. Rather, they are about what Jesus is doing.

He's saying, I'm going to my Father's house, and I am going there by way of the cross.

and it is that very journey that prepares a place for you. Do you see the difference? The place isn't prepared after the cross, as if Jesus goes away and then gets things ready.

[16:30] No, the cross itself is how the place is prepared. By going to Calvary, Jesus clears the way for us to be with the Father, granting us permanent access with him, to dwell with him, as family.

In fact, that word translated rooms, in verse 2, simply means dwelling place, a home only made possible by his sacrifice. Do you see, my brothers and sisters, that's why our hearts don't have to be troubled?

Because Jesus is saying to Peter, and to us, you might deny me, fail me, treat me shabbily, but that doesn't change this fact.

I'm leaving to make room for all those who repent and believe in me. While we were still sinners, Christ died for rest.

In fact, there is a staggering irony at play here, isn't there? Did you notice last week, in 13 verse 21, Jesus himself is described as troubled in spirit because of what he's about to face?

[17:57] But he sets aside his troubled heart to deal gently with our troubled hearts. God wants to assure us that even on the days when we don't feel his presence, even on the days when we know we have sinned, we are not cut off from God because we trust in him.

Because your access to God is not based on how you feel or how you have performed that day, it is based on Jesus, who he is and what he has done.

And when your conscience accuses you, when you know you have failed, when you have acted selfishly and ignored God, you don't have to withdraw, you don't have to hide, you don't try to clean yourself up first.

Rather, you draw near with full assurance. Because your worst days doesn't close the door to God. Rather, they prove how much you need the door Jesus has opened. The cross. And thankfully, if you cling on to that cross, access is guaranteed.

[19 : 26] But if access is guaranteed, how do we get there? that's what Thomas wants to know, and it's what Jesus answers next. So secondly, in Christ, you have the way opened by knowing Jesus.

You see, Thomas is still confused. He doesn't understand why Jesus in verse 4 says, you know the way to the place where I am going.

So he pushes back. He says, well, Jesus, actually, we have no idea. You keep talking as if we already have this information, but we don't.

So how can we know the way? Jesus, perhaps if you pin your destination on Google Maps, then maybe we can figure out the route.

But you see, Thomas is scratching his head because he's made a category confusion. He's thinking of the way as a path you walk. And he's thinking of access to God as locating that right path.

[20 : 39] But Jesus now tells him, you've got it all mixed up. Because the way is a person, indeed a specific person.

Just listen to verse 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

That's why you, Thomas, and all you disciples know the way. You know me, don't you? Now let's be crystal clear on what Jesus is claiming.

Jesus is not saying, let me show you the way as if the way is something external to him. Jesus is not saying, let me give you the system, the formula, the technique by which you can go and find the way on your own.

No, Jesus is saying, I am the way because I embody the truth and the life that comes from the Father. And no other leader of a religion ever made such an audacious claim.

[21 : 56] Not the prophet Muhammad, not Buddha, not Confucius. And actually, if that claim is false, even if it's an exaggeration, then it is hard to take Jesus seriously in any way at all, wouldn't it?

He would just be a madman, frankly speaking, truth. So, either what he says is true, in which case, we have to take everything he says and does with the utmost seriousness, or what he says is false, in which case, we have to completely dismiss him and stop paying any sort of attention to him because he's a liar.

there's no real in between. And if what he says is true, then we have to take what he says in the rest of his answer to Thomas with the utmost seriousness as well.

Look again at verses six and seven. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

In other words, when Jesus says he is the way, what he means is he is the only way, which might sound unloving if it's untrue, but if it is true, then of course it's the loving thing to say, right?

[23 : 46] If there is only one laurel you can take to get to my house, wouldn't it be unloving for me to send you on a wild goose chase to look for all these alternative laurels that doesn't even exist?

And don't forget, Jesus is telling us all this to steady our troubled hearts. He's saying to us, friends, do you know me?

Do you trust me? Follow me? Love me? If you really do, then you really do know God because I'm the way.

In spite of how you feel, in spite of your current circumstances, you really do know God. Notice verse 7 is present tense.

So, you might not understand everything sometimes, you might even get confused, but your confusion doesn't cancel your access.

[24 : 56] Even if you feel like your life sometimes is like you wandering around without a map, and you've got no idea if you are on the right track, if you do genuinely know Jesus, you genuinely know

the way.

You might be in a fog, but you are not lost. Because if Jesus is with you, you always have the way to the Father.

So, the way is open, but now it's the turn of another disciple, Philip, to come up with another implied question, verse 8. Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.

You see, once again, Philip, just like Thomas, is picking up on something Jesus has just said in verse 7. You do know God the Father and have seen him.

So, Philip hears that and asks, hey, but Jesus, we don't see the Father yet. Can you please show us directly? And Jesus' answer will give us another key truth to hang on to whenever our hearts are troubled.

[26 : 21] So, thirdly, in Christ, you have the Father revealed in the words and works of Jesus. You see, don't forget all these disciples are pious Jews.

they worship the God of Israel, Yahweh, and they have been following Jesus, whom they confess as the Messiah. But Philip has not yet made the essential connection.

He hasn't understood that not only is Jesus the representative of the Father, he is the representation of the Father.

of the Father. Let me say that again. He hasn't understood that not only is Jesus the representative of the Father, he is the representation of the Father.

That's why Jesus responds as he does in verse 9. 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.

[27 : 30] how can you say show us the Father? You see, the real issue is not insufficient revelation, but insufficient recognition.

Because by right, if you've heard the words and seen the works of Jesus, you've seen God. In other words, in Christ, you have the Father revealed.

that's why Jesus says verses 10 and 11, don't you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority.

Rather, it is the Father living in me who is doing his work. 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 works itself.

You see, my friends, if you are a Christian today, do you have awe of Jesus? Yes, you do.

[28 : 38] And in Jesus, do you have awe that God wants to say to you and show you? Yes, you do. You don't need anything more than Jesus to come to know and relate to the Father.

In fact, it would almost be insulting to God if you suggest otherwise. Because Jesus says, I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

And here is another wonderful truth. Now, have a look at the screen with me. Now, this is an exercise that one of my former pastors loved to do and has made a great impact on me.

So, this is verse 10 from the ESV, which is pretty similar to the NIV, but with the last three words blanked out. Now, let's just read together what's on the screen.

So, ready? One, two, three. The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me.

[29 : 50] who, now, how do you expect to fill in those blanks? Looking at the sentence, you would have thought it would say something like, speaks his words, don't you?

The words Jesus says, he doesn't say on his own, but it's how the Father speaks. That's what you would have thought it would have said. But the actual verse says, and it's the same in the NIV, 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.

So, in short, as Jesus speaks, the Father works. The Father works through the words of Jesus. which means every time Philip and the other disciples heard Jesus teach, the Father was at work. Every time they saw Jesus heal, raise the dead, feed the thousands, the Father was doing his works through the words of his Son.

Now, think about what that means for us. Every time you open your Bible, the Father is at work. Every time this church gathers and the word of Jesus is open and preached, the Father is at work.

[31 : 19] Every time you share a word of Jesus with a friend who is struggling, the Father is at work. For the words of Jesus are never just words, they are the Father doing his works through his Son reaching into your life.

You see, Philip's request is something we make too, don't we? Though maybe not in those kind of words. Lord, just give me a sign.

Just let me feel your presence. Just show me you are there. And Jesus' answer to Philip is his answer to us. Look at me.

you already have what you're asking for. The Father is not hidden behind Jesus waiting to be found. The Father is seen in Jesus already revealed. And you can access him in the Bible.

[32 : 29] You have his words, his works, his death, his resurrection. so often we think that the power must come through something more dramatic than words on a page.

Maybe you are waiting for that vivid dream, the overpowering emotion in worship, the unmistakable sign in your circumstances, that experience that proves beyond any doubt God must be there.

And because that moment hasn't come, your heart is troubled. But Jesus is saying to Philip and to you, the father is not withholding himself until that dramatic moment arrives.

He is already at work in the words of his son which you already have. Even if you don't realize that yet.

You don't need a sign. You have something better. You have Jesus. And in him you have the father already revealed, already present, already at work.

[33 : 47] He is there. But Jesus has one more thing to say to these troubled disciples and it might be the most surprising claim of all. So fourthly, in Christ you have the kingdom extended by works done in his name.

You see, why shouldn't your hearts be troubled? Because God says even his fearful, feeble disciples have a part to play in his great big plan.

Verse 12, very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things or more literally greater works than these because I am going to the father.

Now this verse has very much been misquoted and misapplied by all sorts of so called Christian groups. Many of these self proclaimed apostles and prophets think John 14 verse 12 is saying that God is promising we can do greater miracles than Jesus did both in quantity and quality.

Usually this is accompanied by some grand claim of revival. But let's not get carried away. Let us ask first, what does Jesus mean when he says we can do greater works?

[35 : 17] Does he mean we can do something even better than make a paralyzed man walk or a blind man see? Let's spend a couple of minutes thinking through this carefully.

Firstly, look carefully at what Jesus says in this verse. Notice, how is it we can do these greater works? It's because Jesus is going to the Father.

So whatever these greater works are, they only happen as a result of Jesus going to the Father. In other words, through his death, resurrection,!

and ascension. So the question becomes, what happens because Jesus goes to the Father? Now to answer that, we need to remember how John's Gospel has already been talking about works.

Back in chapter 5, Jesus has just healed a lame man. That's one of the works he does. He performs a miracle as evidence of his identity.

[36 : 29] But because he does it on the Sabbath, some Jewish leaders come and challenge him. And in that context, Jesus then explains in 5 verse 20 to 21 what God's greater work is.

It is the same phrase as the one being used in John 14. And the essence of the greater work according to Jesus is this, 5 verse 24 on the screen.

Whoever hears my word and believes has eternal life and has crossed over from death to life. So in John 5, the greater works are not actually miracles like healing a paralyzed man.

The greater work instead is the giving of life to the spiritually dead. And that's also why Jesus would also later say this in John 6 verse 29 on the screen.

The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent. Again, do you see what he is saying?

The real work of God is not just miracles, it is people coming to faith in Jesus.

[37 : 48] It's not simply people having bodies which will one day die again, be temporarily healed, or having stomachs which will get hungry again, be temporarily filled.

It is the work of people gaining permanent access to God. Now bring that back to John 14. Jesus says his followers will do greater works because he goes to the Father.

So do you see now how the logic works? Because Jesus goes to the cross, pays for our sin, and is then raised to life and then sends the Spirit, that is why we can do the greater work.

Because the Spirit he sends will take the word about Jesus and through our witness drive it into people's hearts wherever they are.

And as the word goes out into the world, people hear the gospel, people believe the gospel, and person after person crosses over from death to life.

[39 : 00] That's why we get to do the greater work. Not because they are greater in power, but because they are greater in terms of its scope and significance in God's plan.

Because now, through our witness, God's kingdom is extended as people from every nation are brought from spiritual death to life. And we don't have to look far for proof that this is exactly what Jesus meant.

Think about the day of Pentecost. Peter preaches one sermon and thousands cross over from death to life in a single morning. More people come to saving faith that day than across the entire span of Jesus' public ministry.

Not because Peter was greater than Jesus, but because Jesus has gone to the Father, the Spirit has come, and now, as the Spirit comes on Peter and the rest of the apostles, the word is going out. That is the greater work. right there. So don't let your hearts be troubled, because God has this greater works for you to do.

[40 : 17] And if you feel inadequate, then don't forget verses 13 and 14. You can always pray in his name. pray in to pray in Jesus' name.

And nicer holidays. No, to pray in Jesus' name is to pray in alignment with who he is and what he came to do, which this whole passage has been showing us.

He came to glorify the Father, he came to open the way, he came to reveal the Father, he came to extend the kingdom. So to pray in his name is to pray with those purposes in your heart.

It is to say, Father, use me, use my words, my witness, my ordinary life to bring others from death to life for your glory.

And Jesus says, that prayer, I will answer. Because the Father is glorified in the Son when dead souls come alive.

[41 : 32] So as we finish, my friends, remember where we started this morning. The disciples are losing Jesus. Peter is about to deny him. Their world is collapsing. But as we have seen, Jesus' departure wasn't a desertion.

It was a rescue. mission. He went to the cross to guarantee your access when you fail. He opened the way so that even in the fog of life, you are never lost.

He revealed the Father so you never have to wonder where to find him. And finally, he gives you a purpose that is bigger than your anxiety. So even though he is not physically here, in some ways, we are in a better position than the disciples on that night before the cross.

They were waiting for the cross, the resurrection, the spirit. We live on the other side of all three. So don't let your hearts be troubled.

Whatever you're facing right now, you can face it with God. And you can face it together.

Remember what Jesus said in 13 verse 34 and 35?

[42 : 53] Love one another. Because the community that loves like Jesus is itself a witness to the excess they have. And let us now make full use of that excess style as we go to God in prayer.

Let's pray. Father, I just pray, Lord, that as we ponder these words of yours, perhaps some of them a little bit harder to understand than others, but Lord, we just pray that what you have said to us, we will hear, and that you are doing your great work in us as we hear the words of Jesus.

So I pray that that will be exactly what will happen now, that by your spirit you will bring assurance and you bring conviction. I pray all this in the name of Christ.

Amen.