

The Way

John 14:1-6

Lots of people struggle with depression. For many people, the battle is especially intense. Sometimes the cause is grief. It could be another occasion of loss. It could be the trials and stresses of life. For some, the circumstances of life can make people distraught, bring them to despair. It is a painful and paralyzing experience. And to some extent, everyone of us feels the oppression of life. I suspect that everyone of you has something troubling on your mind and heart, some, obviously more than others. For many of you, I know what sorts of things are troubling you, or have troubled you recently. So my goal this evening is that God would restore and make secure that sense of peaceful satisfaction that Jesus offers to his disciples in John 14, "Let not your heart be troubled."

That offer is actually a command, an exhortation. Yet it is certainly,

I. AN ENCOURAGING EXHORTATION.

It was encouraging to the disciples because something was greatly troubling them. Jesus was leaving. Chapter 14 is immediately connected with chapter 13. We read in,

13:33 "Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you."

What an occasion for grief! Jesus is leaving them. And they couldn't come. In all of that, what Jesus has to say to us is clear.

A. We are commanded to free ourselves from agitated anxiety.

I use that expression to explain what it means to be troubled. Literally the word means to be so troubled as to shake. That's an experience I know personally, because sometimes when I'm called upon to speak in particularly important or confrontational settings, I often literally start shaking. As if I were shivering in the cold. It's quite embarrassing, and uncontrollable. The nerves just get over active and I shake. That's not uncommon.

Agitated anxiety. Worry that causes you to shake. And what does Jesus say? Don't do it. Don't let your heart be troubled. Perhaps more compassionately or personally, I should interpret that this way, "You don't need to let your heart be troubled!" You don't need to be agitated. You don't need to worry.

Paul teaches the same thing, when he writes to the Philippians,

Phil. 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!
5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Those familiar verses are really a commentary on what Jesus tells his disciples here in,
v.1

Don't be agitated. Instead, believe. Have faith, for,

B. We are commanded to exercise our faith.

Now, I don't want those words as I speak them to be condemning. I don't want them to cause you to think, "I'm really troubled by something, so I must not be a Christian."

These words, as Jesus spoke them, didn't condemn the disciples for a lack of faith, but might be translated, "Continue to believe in God. Continue to believe in me." "Continue to exercise the faith that you have."

Or, as the New King James translates it, he could be saying, "You already believe in God, now believe in me also." The idea in all those translations is of an encouragement to believe, not a condemnation for unbelief. And with that encouragement, I want to stress the impact of the exhortation.

So I would say to all who are troubled, believe in God. Believe in Jesus. Believe in his promises. Believe in his mercy. Believe in his grace. Believe in his goodness. Believe that he is a father who takes care of his children perfectly. Continue to believe, as you already do!

The word for believe means to trust, and in its most basic form, worry or agitation is really an unwillingness to trust God, isn't it?

Again, in those words in Philippians 4, the solution to worry is prayer. "Be anxious for nothing, but ...let your requests be made known to God."

So do it! Rather than give in to worry and anxiety, rather than let yourself be agitated and shaken, believe God! And pray to him to take care of whatever is troubling you.

Believe his promises. Believe his word. Believe his power and sovereign authority to work all things together for good! Believe them. For in a practical sense, in an experiential sense, worry is the denial of faith. Agitated anxiety does mean that in experience, at least, you are denying the presence and power of

God. So,
v.1

I wish to preach those words with compassion, with the willingness to weep with those who weep. These words are not merely easy answers to hard questions, they are not simplistic reactions that give the appearance of spirituality but are really attempts to hide from the reality of pain, but spoken in faith, they offer the most profound spiritual advice that can be offered.

Pain and suffering are real. Trouble is real. As Jesus will soon say to his disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation." He goes on to say, "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Nonetheless, the reality of a variety of trouble is sure and certain.

I believe that one of the causes of the disciples trouble was their disappointment at seeing their Jewish expectations of a worldly kingdom, under an earthly messiah, failing and coming to an end. And that disappointment was intense. Their hopes were dashed. Their time with Jesus wasted, as it were. For they were beginning to understand that his leaving them meant that he was going to die. Therefore Jesus gave them,

II. A GLORIOUS HOPE.

These are precious words to us, are they not?

v.2-3

Let me state the obvious. He's speaking about heaven. And these are the words Jesus chooses to comfort those who are troubled.

His calls heaven, "My father's house." Now, surely, God has no literal house, with walls and roof, as we do. But where he dwells is called his house.

Just one cross reference,

Ps. 33:13 "The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. 14 From the place of His dwelling He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth."

Heaven is there defined as "the place of his dwelling." And what a glorious place it is. Notice the description here of,

A. The glory of heaven.

v.2 "Many mansions."

In other words, there is plenty of room. There may be no place to find rest on earth, no place to be free of trouble. But there is room enough in heaven. MANY mansions.

The word for "mansion" simply means dwellings, or abiding places, and I believe the intended meaning of that word is to stress the permanence of those dwelling places, the unchanging, unvarying house in heaven. You see, when our life on this world is described, the idea of something temporary always comes to the forefront. Everything about this life is temporary, transient, passing away. So frequently are we reminded of that in Scripture. For example,

Is. 40:6 "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

Also, Ps. 90:3 "You turn man to destruction, And say, "Return, O children of men." 4 For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night. 5 You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: 6 In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers... 10 The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

The great glory of heaven is its incorruptible and eternal permanence. And when you look at the trouble of this world, that eternal perspective is the only source of true hope. Isn't it?

And eternity is something that we should begin to look forward to, isn't it? Turn with me to,

2 Cor. 4:7-15 7 "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God."

2 Cor. 4:16 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our

outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

There is the hope, the permanent, eternal hope.

And what is our perspective upon those light and momentary afflictions in this world?

2 Cor. 5:1 “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

What glory shall there be when our “mortality is swallowed up by life.” What glory there shall be when we shall live and exist in the very presence of God. The glory of heaven.

But what is,

B. Our place in heaven.

v.2

Jesus is preparing our place in heaven. Just think about that

a little bit. Think about it a lot. That’s your guarantee. That’s your assurance. That is your confidence.

And how does Jesus prepare a place for you? I should say, How DID Jesus prepare a place for you? It was as a priest. Our place in heaven was prepared for us at the cross, when Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins, satisfying the condemnation and wrath of God that each one of us deserved. Our place in heaven was reserved when Jesus endured the curse of the covenant on our behalf, submitting himself to death, the curse of the covenant, so that we could have life.

Jesus removed the barriers that sin had caused in our relationship with God. Jesus himself appears before God the father on our behalf, as our advocate, our defense attorney who pleads our case. He stands as our representative, and he, and he alone, grants us entrance. And notice how he describes,

C. Our reception into heaven.

v.3

What a gracious host. He will come back and get us. He will escort us. And in so personal a manner, he will come again and receive us to himself!

Thus, the very definition of heaven for us is to be received unto Jesus. To be with Jesus.

And what a glorious foretaste of that experience is ours whenever we assemble together for public worship, like we’re doing right now. For this is what we will be doing in heaven, standing before the throne of God and singing his praise. That was certainly the vision of heaven given to the Apostle John, writing in,

Rev. 5:11 “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” 14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”

What a glorious hope. But I have to ask a very important question? Who is invited? Who will experience that glory in heaven? Who of you will go to heaven when you die? And how do you get there?

The disciples were asking those very questions, for Jesus said to them,

v.4

But with a definite slowness to understand, Thomas speaks, probably speaking for the rest of the disciples,

v.5

Jesus’ answer to that question is surely one of the greatest statements in the whole Bible.

v.6

That is the answer to that greatest question that a man could ever ask, “How can I get to heaven?”

The answer: By invitation only. By,

III. AN EXCLUSIVE INVITATION.

By Jesus’ invitation.

You can come to the father ONLY one way, through Jesus Christ. You can gain entrance into heaven only one way, through Jesus Christ. You can obtain eternal life only one way, through Jesus Christ.

Let me start by saying something that everyone needs to hear, especially any of you who do not yet trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation. Your works, your good works, will not be enough to get to heaven. You will not go to heaven on the basis of any good works, not on the basis of anything you do. And if you are trying to go that way, if you are trying to obtain salvation and receive eternal life by your own works, you are doomed to failure! And condemnation. Because the standard is perfection, and every one of you has fallen short of that standard, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

If you are trying to obey the law, or keep the ten commandments, or observe the golden rule, and think that your efforts will be enough so that when you die you can go to heaven, I must say to you that you will fail. And the stakes are very high. For if you don’t enter heaven when you die, you will instead enter that eternal place of torment that is described as a lake of fire, hell fire where the fire is never quenched.

So, in answer to Thomas’ question, what is the way to heaven? The only way?

Jesus.

A. Jesus is the exclusive way to enter heaven.

v.6 “I am the way.”

Jesus does not merely show the way. He is himself the way. And that is what the apostles preached in the early church.

Act 4:10 “Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Now, on the surface, that contradicts and totally eliminates the idea that all religions are the same. It totally puts an end to the thought that religious plurality, religious toleration, religious ecumenicity should predominate. It is foolish to think that you can believe in Jesus and believe that you will get to heaven through him, and that another person in another religion can believe in another system of salvation, and also get to heaven. It’s foolish to think that a Moslem, abiding by the teaching of the prophet Mohammed, could ever obtain eternal life. Or that someone committed to eastern religions like Confucianism or Buddhism or their new age counterparts would be saved. Likewise, a Jew who rejects Jesus Christ.

Without Christ, there is no salvation. He, and he alone, is the way to enter heaven. Therefore,

B. Jesus is the very definition of absolute truth.
v.6 “I am the truth.”

Not simply, “I teach the truth.” But “I am the embodiment of truth.” I am the word of God made flesh. I am truth.

Thus John Calvin has written, “If any man turns aside from Christ he can do nothing but go astray. If any man does not rest on Him, he will feed elsewhere on nothing but wind and vanity.”

Jesus is truth. Absolute truth. And in our day, I need to define that phrase, and it isn’t hard to do. Absolute truth is something that is true always, in all circumstances, at all times. The late Francis Schaefer coined a useful phrase, “true truth,” in reaction to those who would claim that truth might be relative. That is, what is true for you is not necessarily true for me. He wanted to define that which was true for everyone. Hence, true truth.

The concept of relative truth is what fuels the ecumenical attitude of our day, not referring to different denominations of genuine Christians, but referring to different religions. Christian and non-Christian. The spirit of our age says, “Let everyone believe whatever he wants to believe, and for him, that’s truth!” And therefore, in that same spirit, there is the idea that all religions are ultimately the same, leading to the same place, referring to the same God, just with different names.

The sad consequence of believing only in relative truth is that relative truth is really no truth at all, and the philosophical idea of our age is called post-modernism, which really believes that there is no truth at all! No such thing as truth, in any objective, consistent way.

It is this absence of this idea of truth, absolute truth, that enabled the President of the United States, a few years ago, to answer a question, under oath, in a court of law, “It depends what the meaning of “is” is.”

You see, “is” might mean one thing for me, and something entirely different for you.

In the religious sector, people will say, “‘God’ means one thing to me and it might mean something entirely different for you.” “Eternal life might mean one thing to me and something else for you.” Or salvation. Or heaven. And I could go on and on with such foolishness.

I believe that the fundamental task of the church, in terms of evangelism, in terms of proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers, has to begin right here. We need to declare, with reservation, that the word of God is truth, absolute truth. It is unchanging truth, dependent only upon the authority of God which inspired it to determine its truthfulness.

In other words, you and I don’t determine that the Bible is true. The church doesn’t determine the Bible to be true. We accept it to be true, because it is given by God, given by inspiration of God. It is true because it is God’s word. And to believe that it is true is to believe that it is absolute truth.

The Bible is the word of God. And what we read when we began studying this book of John were these words,

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men...14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus is the word. Jesus is the truth. Jesus is the very definition of absolute truth. And therefore,

C. Jesus is the only source of eternal life.

v.6 “I am the life.”

Do you remember what Jesus said to Martha and the rest of the family of Lazarus, after that good friend of Jesus’ had died?

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Life. Eternal life. Life after death. Resurrection. All of those things are found in Jesus, and in Jesus alone. The invitation to heaven is an exclusive one. It is given only to those who believe in Jesus.

So I say to you, “Do you believe this?”

And I say to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

Rom. 10:13 “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’”

Jesus is the way the truth and the life. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, the second person of the trinity, the eternal word of God, and he is the way, the truth and the life.

And for all of you who know that, and believe it, let all of this good teaching and good doctrine be very practical. Remember the context of these words. I’ll go right back where I started. Think again about whatever is troubling you today. Think again about whatever it is that you are worrying about. Now, listen again to these words,

v.1-3