



Meeting Jesus: He Guards
John 14:27
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Sunday, August 23, 2020
Sermon Link: <https://bit.ly/2QkXnJD>

What is the condition of your heart? I'm not asking about that muscle in the center of your chest that circulates blood to nourish your body, but you know that. I'm asking about the center of who you are as a person—the center of your inner life that drives everything else you are and do. When I was in college, I was introduced by Campus Crusade for Christ to what would become a pivotal proverb in my life:

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

-Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

The word translated “heart” is the Hebrew *leb*, which means “inner person, mind, will, heart.” Your heart is precious to God, and it should be precious to you, too. God commands you to guard it above all else, to fight for it against the enemies it will face. Everything you do flows from your heart.

Sometimes, though, life brings us to places where we are tempted to lose heart. We are faced with difficulty and uncertainty, and those types of circumstances often lead to anxiety and dejection. What do we do in those moments? How do we guard our hearts when life tempts us to lose heart?

The answer is Jesus. Through Jesus, God has opened the way to Himself. Through Jesus, God has opened the way for us to embrace His guardianship of our hearts. He invites us to find rest in Him.

Today, we travel once again to the Upper Room with Jesus and His disciples. Jesus has just washed their feet, instituted the Lord's Supper, and predicted Peter's denial. He is seeking to prepare them for what the next hours will bring, and He knows what they cannot – they are getting ready to face the most difficult three days the world has ever known. The Son of God is about to be betrayed, arrested, tried, unjustly convicted, sentenced to death, beaten, mocked, spit upon, derided, and crucified. He will die, and darkness will cover the land. The disciples will fear for their lives. They will scatter. They will fail. Darkness will reign, but only for a while. Victory will come, but it will come only after intense pain. Jesus is preparing them, and in so doing, He says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

Jesus is showing them how their hearts can be guarded in Him. As He does, He'll show us how our hearts can be guarded in Him, too.

Big Idea – *Jesus guards.*

1) Jesus guards our hearts with peace (14:27a).

²⁷ *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (John 14:27a).

Jesus begins His statement with peace, but there's a deeper meaning being communicated here than you or I might first grasp. When you or I think "peace," we might mean the absence of conflict, or we might mean some sort of inner tranquility. When Jesus says "peace," He means more. He means *shalom*.

Shalom is the Hebrew word that we translate "peace," but the fuller definition of the word is "completeness, soundness, welfare, peace." The word connotes a sense of safety and soundness in one's body, a sense of welfare, health, and prosperity, all stemming from being in right relationship with God. It's the word David uses in Psalm 4, which ends with the psalmist saying, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8).

God's desire for us is *shalom*. He wants us to live at peace with Him, and He wants us to live in His peace. He has provided the way to peace with Him by giving His only Son, Jesus, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life (see John 3:16). Anyone who comes to God by turning away from sin to trust and follow Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior is at peace with God, and that is the richest blessing God can give us. But God is willing to bless us even beyond our salvation by allowing us to rest in His peace. How? God tells us in Philippians 4:

Philippians 4:4-7 - ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.

In 2019, the most searched-for verse on the YouVersion Bible app was Philippians 4:6: "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." In 2019, Biblegateway.com released that the word "peace" was the second most popular keyword search, second only to "love." The conclusion? People want what is described in Philippians 4:4-7; people want peace. God has made a way for us to have it.

In Philippians 4:4-7, we are given some steps we can take to embrace Jesus' peace. First, we set our hearts to rejoice in the Lord at all times. No matter what, we fix the trajectory of our hearts toward delighting in God's grace. We will look *for* God's grace in every situation, and we will look *to* God's grace in every situation.

Second, we comfort ourselves with the knowledge that the Lord is at hand. The Lord is with me, and He is willing to receive my cries, prayers, thoughts, and anxieties. When I realize this, I know that I can actively combat anxiety by action – the action of approaching God honestly and boldly in prayer.

Third, when I take the action step of approaching God honestly and boldly in prayer – casting my anxieties on Him in the knowledge that He cares for me so deeply (see 1 Peter 5:7)– He will replace my worry with His peace that passes understanding. He will guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection

1) How does the action step of prayer combat anxiety? How can you combat anxiety right now?

2) Jesus guards our hearts with faith (14:27b).

Not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14.27b).

The Kingdom of God is different from the kingdoms of the world. What the world gives is fleeting, ephemeral, temporary. What Jesus gives is eternal, and what Jesus gives is accessed only by faith.

The Bible tells us that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson paraphrases this verse by saying, “The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It’s our handle on what we can’t see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd” (Hebrews 11:1 MSG). Faith is our handle on what we can’t see. That’s powerful.

When we look to what the world can give us, we use our senses. We look to what we can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. When we look to what Jesus gives us, we have to look beyond our senses. The Bible says that we who trust and follow Jesus “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). We who trust and follow Jesus “look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen” Why? Because “the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Jesus guards our hearts by reminding us that there’s a greater reality impacting our lives now, and an even better reality awaiting us in Christ. Peter put it this way:

1 Peter 1:3-9 - ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

By God’s power expressed through Jesus Christ, we are being guarded through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. God is going to finish the work He has started in us, and the glory of that eternal experience is far greater than any light, momentary affliction we must now endure (see Romans 8:18 & 2 Corinthians 4:17).

We can’t currently see Jesus, but we believe in Him. Every test we face only makes our faith stronger and more robust. Every trial we endure serves only to reveal God’s faithfulness to us, showing us that we can trust Him and follow Him. He is with us. He gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, and no one can take that away from us (see John 10:28-29).

Questions for Reflection/Discussion

- 1) If you are in Christ, what does your future look like? How will your life look in 10,000 years?
- 2) If your future is secure in Christ, how does that truth help you endure today’s struggles?

3) Jesus guards our hearts Himself (14:27c).

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid (John 14:27c).

This phrase is familiar. We've heard it before. Perhaps we have committed it to memory. It comes at the beginning of this same chapter of John's Gospel, when Jesus is beginning His discourse about going to prepare a place for His disciples. Do you remember?

John 14:1-6 - "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In 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? ³And 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. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus is conveying to His disciples that they are about to experience the worst three days in human history, and He won't be there to help them through it. He must endure these events to prepare a place for them in Glory, and one day, He will take them to be with Him. He is making the way to the Father for any who would come to Him in repentance and faith.

In this context, knowing how badly they're about to hurt, Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled." The word translated "troubled" is the Greek *tarasso*, which means "to stir up, to trouble;" it means that something has caused inner turmoil and emotional agitation. Jesus is commanding them not to allow their hearts to be stirred up within them in response to circumstances outside their control. He then tells them what to do instead: "Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). The word translated "believe" is the Greek *pisteuo*, which means "believe, entrust;" and in this expression, it's best understood as a command: "Trust Me."

What is Jesus saying? Essentially, "Things are about to get hard, but it's all going to be okay in the end. Don't panic. I'm working. Trust God. Trust Me."

Jesus returns to this idea now in John 14:27, as He repeats again this imperative: "Let not your hearts be troubled." This time He adds, "neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27c). He has shared with them what He'll be doing behind the scenes: preparing a place for them in Glory. At this point, He has shared with them something else of vital importance:

John 14:18-20 - ¹⁸"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

He has promised them the Holy Spirit – the ever presence of God within those who trust and follow Jesus. He will assure them that Jesus is in the Father, and they are in Jesus, and Jesus is in them. He Himself will guard them. He Himself will protect them. He Himself will be with them. They need not be afraid.

Questions for Reflection/Discussion

1) If you trust and follow Jesus, does the knowledge that He is with you right now encourage you? How can you allow that truth to strengthen your heart when life gets hard?

Final Thought

Your heart is precious. It is precious to God, and it should be precious to you. If you are in Christ, Jesus guards your heart with peace and with faith. He guards your heart Himself, and He invites you to enter the battle against your heart's enemies with Him. He invites you to rest in His peace by faith in Him, and ultimately, He invites you to rest in Him. Will you?

To dwell in Jesus' rest, you must be willing to fight the good fight of faith, resisting the Enemy so that he will flee from you (see James 4:7). When fear and anxiety pound on your heart's door, resist. Fight. Heed the words of Thomas á Kempis, who reminds us that our Enemy is better kept out of our heart before he enters than forced out once we let him in:

"Yet we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of the temptation; for the enemy is then more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of our hearts, but be resisted without the gate at his first knock. Wherefore one said, 'Withstand the beginnings for an after remedy comes often too late.' For first there comes to the mind a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination thereof, afterwards delight, and an evil motion, and then consent. And so by little and little our wicked enemy gets complete entrance, whilst he is not resisted in the beginning. And the longer a man is negligent in resisting, so much the weaker does he become daily in himself, and the enemy stronger against him."

-*The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas á Kempis, Book I, Chapter XIII

When the Enemy approaches you with fear, worry, and anxiousness, fight. Fight first, not giving him a chance to get in. Don't open the door of your heart to him. Fight fiercely, persevering in prayer against his persistence. Fight unfairly, appealing to the One who has already won the victory. You are no match for his advances, but if you are in Christ, the One who is in you is greater than your adversary. Appeal to the Lord. Embrace His *shalom*. Cry out to Him with the prayer of faith. Rest in His presence. God's got this.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

-Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)