

John 14:1-6 *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going."⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

Heavens open – are you on the Way?

1. Heaven is ready for us
2. Jesus is the Way
3. Jesus and the Father are one

Where is your home for the stay at home order? Most of us have a modest single-family home. Some of you might have a larger house. Some of you might be staying at home in a tiny apartment. The neighbors behind us haven't been seen since this whole thing started. We guess that they took their camper and are staying at home in it somewhere where it's warmer. Some people are staying at home in their cottage up north. Some, sadly, have no home at all. They can't stay at home because home is nowhere. Whatever you call home, whatever place that you have become attached to, that place where you can relax and be yourself, where you find shelter and comfort – that's not your home. Heaven is home. And Jesus tells us this morning that heaven's open. Are you on the way?

Jesus said, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.* What troubles you? Have you lost someone close to you recently? Do you have a loved one in the hospital? Do family squabbles trouble you? Are you troubled by the state of politics in our country today? This whole Covid-19 thing has brought trouble to a lot of people physically and economically. Do the evils of our culture trouble you? Does your sin trouble you?

Jesus says, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled."* With faith in Jesus we are not troubled by the burden of our sin and guilt because they were nailed to the cross of our Savior at Calvary. We are not troubled by who is in control because our Lord lives and reigns. We are not troubled by fear or uncertainty because "in all things God works for the good of those who love him." (Romans 8:28) Neither are we troubled by whatever threatens us, because nothing "In all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39)

Jesus' disciples were troubled. They had just finished the last Passover meal that they would eat together. Jesus had told them he was going to be betrayed by one of them. He predicted Peter's denial and their desertion. Shortly, they would be heading out to the Garden of Gethsemane where all this would take place.

With all this weighing on their hearts, Jesus told them not to be troubled. Why? Because he was going to prepare a place for them. *My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?* Many of you remember the King James said "mansions" and that conjured up a whole different picture for us. Actually, "mansions" was a good translation in 1611. "Mansions" was taken from the Latin translation of the Bible which used the word, "mansiones," a staying place. Originally, that's what mansions meant. A mansion was simply a staying place, a permanent residence. It was after the time of the King James Bible that it took on the meaning that we attach to it: A large, expensive home. What Jesus is promising is that there will be a permanent place for us in heaven.

He's also assuring us that it is ready. There's no waiting list to get into heaven. We don't have to make application and see if we are one of the few qualified for heaven. Heaven is home. Jesus has plenty of room for all his people there.

I know of an adult who can still feel the sting of childhood rejection. She was always the last one picked when choosing sides at recess. In essence she was being told "We have no room for you on our team." Have you heard those words in the workplace? "Sorry, I have no room for you in my business plan." From someone you love? "I have no room for you in my heart." From a bigot? "There's no room here for your type."

Jesus experienced that rejection, too. His own people said there was no room for him in Judea. But the cross is so much more than human rejection; it was rejection from his Father. The crucifixion was heaven's thundering statement of justice: "There's no room for you in my heaven, Jesus." Jesus endured the ultimate rejection so that we could have the ultimate acceptance. He was shoved out so that we could be welcomed in. Jesus became humanity's doormat, a

place to leave the dirt of its sin. As a result, the red carpet of forgiveness points the way to the Father's door. Behind that door are many rooms, one custom made for you. (James Mattek)

And he adds to his promise: *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.* Picture a child away at camp, lonely, afraid, and unhappy. Now the child becomes sick. What will make the child happy? The child will be happy when mom and dad show up to take him home. That's what Jesus does at the death of every Christian. He comes to take them home.

At the airport you will see tears. Tears flow from reunion joy. Tears fall from departing sadness. One of the frightening aspects of saying goodbye is that you may never see one another again. My parents are old. My dad is 92 and my mom is 89. At the end of our visits to them, I can see the sadness in their eyes because they never know if this is the last time they will see us. But for believers in Jesus there will never be a last time we will see them. I never say goodbye to Christians on their deathbed. I always say, "See you later."

Why can I say that? Because they are on the way. *Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"*⁶ *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Have you ever been lost? Not the "walk out of the shopping mall into the parking lot and can't find your car" type of lost but the "just can't get to where you want to go no matter how hard you try" kind of lost. Maybe that happened to you when you were quite young and got separated from your parents. Perhaps it happened to you recently when you were in a strange place. It's not a good feeling, is it? Nobody likes to feel helpless. Have you noticed? People who are lost are pretty easy to spot.

But we don't worry about that today so much. We have GPS on our phones! Last summer we went to Brooklyn, New York, to visit our son. I don't think I would attempt to drive into Brooklyn without GPS on my phone. Even with that, it was difficult at times. One morning, I had to move my car because of parking regulations. I drove around for a half hour trying to find one parking space where I could leave my car for the day. When I finally found one, I had no clue where I was. But I put our AirBNB into my phone and it showed me how to get back. Even better my phone could tell me where my parked car was so I could find it later.

Just as all roads in Brooklyn don't lead back to my car, so all roads don't lead to heaven. The religion of the Jew, Muslim or Buddhist will not get them to heaven, because they don't have the one way: Jesus Christ. Only faith in Jesus will save because only Jesus deals with the real problem of life: our sin. Only Jesus could take our place and carry our load of sin. When he died on the cross for us, he paid the penalty demanded for our sins and his resurrection proves that payment for sins is marked "paid in full."

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Are you on the way? A number of years ago, more years than you'd perhaps care to think about, John Denver sang this line: "Take me home, country roads." The whole song was about the singer's deep desire to return home, to go back to where he was comfortable and felt loved. The song touched a desire we all have. We desire to go home, where we belong.

You are going home, to your real home, to the home Jesus has prepared for you in his kingdom of glory. You don't know when, but the fact remains, you are going home. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection guarantee it. God's grace has created faith in your heart to believe it. Because Jesus, your King, promises it, it's as good as done. All that's left is the waiting – no wondering ifs, no disappointing maybes, just an eager longing to go home.

Some of you may be enjoying the stay at home order. You go to virtual meetings in your pajamas. You can spend more time with the family and you get more done around home. But I would guess most of us are tired of this. We want things to get back to normal. We want an end to stay at home. There will be no end to our heavenly home. It will be our permanent lodging for all eternity. And we will never, ever get tired of it.