

Troubled
June 15, 2014

Are you troubled today? Are you facing something in your life that has troubled your heart, troubled your spirit, troubled your health, troubled your peace of mind?

There are any number of things that could be troubling you. There are many troubles troubling the world. These include gangs, drug cartels, terrorists, revolutions, human cloning, fire ants, crazy ants, killer bees, gypsy moths, stink bugs, dying honey bees, and much more. Maybe you are troubled by all the wars and threats of war in the news this week.

There are many troubles troubling our nation. Maybe you are troubled by the economy, the national debt. Maybe you are troubled by the immigration problems. Maybe you are troubled by the changes taking place to the definition of marriage in our country. Maybe you are troubled by pollution. Maybe you are troubled by the growing water shortages.

As Christians there are some troubles that are unique to us. Christians all over the world are being threatened, driven from their homes, and even killed by radical Muslims, radical Hindus, radical Jews, radical Buddhists, and even radical atheists.

Are you troubled today? Maybe your health is threatened by illness. Maybe you are troubled with relationship problems. Maybe your family is threatened with the loss of a loved one. Maybe your home is threatened by economic troubles. Maybe your confidence in God is threatened by doubts. These are just a few of the things that could be troubling you today.

And I doubt it is the first time you have ever been troubled, ... worried, ... stressed out, ... depressed, ... or fearful. Troubles are a part of life. And new troubles are always popping up to threaten us.

What do you do when you are troubled? What do you when trouble comes to your life? How do you deal with the threat that trouble carries?

In a troubled situation some people have said to me, "I need a cigarette." Some people seek the effects of the drug nicotine when they are troubled.

Other use alcoholic drinks to dim their awareness of what troubles them. Of course this means drinking to excess. But that is one temporary escape from trouble that some people use.

Some people react to the threat of trouble with music. Maybe you put on the headphones and play your favorite, calming music, or praise music, or a recording of the ocean's gentle waves lapping the shore.

Maybe you exercise. A run or long walk can help you deal with the physical effects of a troubled heart.

Maybe you react to the threat of trouble in food, over-indulging in things that are tasty, but not very good for you.

How do you react to trouble in your life or the threat of trouble? In our lesson today Jesus has words of comfort for us who are troubled. He also wants to give us help for our troubled hearts. He wants to help us deal successfully with what might be troubling us today.

We read in John's gospel...

John 14:1 (NIV) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

This may be a familiar passage to you. It is often used in funerals. Yet the context has nothing to do with a death or funeral. While it is true that Jesus will die on the cross the day after saying these words, His disciples don't know that. Jesus hasn't told them plainly this night that He will die on a cross the next day. So when Jesus tells them not to let their hearts be troubled it is not His death that has them troubled.

Rather it is the other things that He HAS been telling them. They found what He said to be troubling. First, He had told them to wash each other's feet (John 13:14). That was a troubling word to hear. This was a demeaning chore, one that was usually handled by a slave, a servant, or a child. Yet, Jesus Himself had just washed their feet and told them that He expected them to wash each other's feet.

These are the same men that had just been arguing with each other about who was the greatest among them (Luke 22:24). These were conceited men, full of personal pride. They could not see themselves washing each other's feet, or doing anything else that resembled serving each other.

Yes, this expectation by Jesus of them was certainly troubling. But there was more. Jesus announced that one of them was going to betray Him (John 13:21). That was troubling news. Then Jesus announced that He was leaving and they couldn't come with Him (John 13:33). That was even more troubling.

It was after giving them all this troubling news that He said,

John 14:1 (NIV) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

The word Jesus uses means to stir or agitate. If you have ever found a mud puddle where all the soil has settled and then taken a stick and stirred it, the water becomes cloudy with silt again and remains so for a long time. That is the picture of a troubled heart.

So anything that stirs up heavy, negative emotions in your heart is what Jesus is speaking about. We may be unable to do anything about the threat of the troubles. But we have a choice in how we react to them. That is Jesus' point. We do not have to let the troubles keep our hearts stirred up with negative emotions. We don't have to let the threat of trouble cause ongoing feelings of dread, worry, and fear.

Four of the great grandchildren were making way to much noise for the comfort level of the older adults, and the younger adults seemed to be oblivious to it all. So I grabbed some Go Fish cards and paired them up for a matching game to involve the children. One of them was pouting because her brother called her a sore loser. She said he caused her to be a sore loser. I told her that wasn't true. Instead, she chose to be a sore loser.

I poked my lip out like hers was and told her he didn't make her poke out her lip, she chose to do so. I told her she was choosing to be a sore loser. She could choose to be a joyful loser instead. She could say, "Yea, I lost the game!" That last part went over her head, I think. But she understood that she was choosing to be a sore loser. Her brother did not make her one by calling her one.

Jesus is saying we have a choice about what resides in our hearts. We can choose to let negative emotions stay stirred up there, or we can choose joyful, positive things to focus on in our hearts.

OUR lives are full of troubles too. And these troubles can trouble our hearts. A troubled heart makes a bad situation worse. A troubled heart leads to despair. A troubled heart robs us of joy. A troubled heart can lead to doubting God. A troubled heart dishonors Christ Jesus who said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled".

We cannot rid ourselves of troubles. We will always have troubles. We will always have the threat of more troubles. We will always have the memory of past troubles and maybe some leftover consequences of past troubles. No, we cannot rid our lives of troubles.

But what we CAN do is what Jesus said. We can choose to not let our hearts be troubled. He did not say to get rid of all possible troubles. Instead, He said not to let the troubles trouble your heart.

So do what Jesus says to do. Don't let your heart be troubled. Though troubles threaten you in some way, don't let the troubles trouble your heart. Troubles may cause all kinds of other problems for you, but don't let troubles trouble your spirit. Don't let troubles trouble your faith in God. Don't let troubles trouble your love of Jesus.

Instead of focusing on what troubles can do, focus on what God can do. Jesus says to trust in God and also in Him. Some versions translate the first part as a present fact. "You trust in God, trust also in me." That is an acceptable translation of the Greek text. And it was certainly true. Some of these men had left homes and families and businesses to seek God's will even before they knew of Jesus. They had a lot of faith in God. Jesus says to apply that same faith to Him.

But Jesus also gives them three joys to hold in their hearts instead of troubles. First, **He is going to do something good for them.**

John 14:2 (NIV) In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

They first came to Judea to hear what John the Baptist said. They already believed in heaven and wanted to be there. So this news of Jesus is very welcome.

The second fact is that **He will return to them.**

John 14:3a (NIV) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back...

The third comforting word Jesus has for them is that **They will be together again.**

John 14:3b (NIV) 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.

This is what will make heaven, heaven, being with Jesus. It wouldn't be heaven without being with Jesus. As one commentator has said, "You don't go to heaven to find Christ. You go to Christ to find heaven."

All of these facts that Jesus shared with them apply to us also. Jesus is even now preparing heaven for us, just as He is preparing us for heaven. In the midst of our grief this week, this was a comforting thought, one that we voiced together.

Our hope of heaven is not just some idle wish. People wish to win the lottery. Or they wish to retire to Florida. Or they wish to live long enough to see their grandkids grow up. We wish for all kinds of things. And we have no basis for expecting these things to come true.

But heaven is different. As Christians we have been promised heaven. If Jesus is true then heaven is too. For His reputation and glory are on the line when He promises us a heavenly home. We believe in the reality of heaven because Jesus says we have a place there with Him.

Christian, take great joy in that truth. And don't let your heart be troubled. **When there is trouble, trust in the power of God instead of in the power of the trouble.**

I spent most of this past week in Pennsylvania. My dad is dying. I heard a good truth from my mom this week. "God is good even when life is hard." I rejoiced to hear my mom say that to the hospital chaplain, even while we were troubled by grief. My family experienced the truth of God's goodness this week. I found in Jesus for not letting my heart be troubled.

Invitation

My mom told several people this week something one of her pastors said. When you are born your expiration date is stamped on your bottom and only God can read it. The hospital chaplain said he would never look at a barcode the same way again.

Only God can read your expiration date. Only God can change it too. Only God can put the preservative of salvation from sin in you by your faith in Jesus to give you eternal life.

Do you want eternal life? Now is the time to say yes to Jesus.

Are you troubled by your own sin? Then say yes to Jesus.

Are you troubled about facing God on Judgment Day? Then say yes to Jesus.

Are you troubled about being found guilty of sin and condemned to hell? Then say yes to Jesus.

God wants to pardon you of your sin, but the condition is your faith in Jesus. As long as you refuse to believe on Jesus and receive Him as your Savior and Lord, God will not pardon you of sin. Your only hope against the trouble of hell is Jesus. Won't you say yes to Him today?