



SERMON TITLE: Don't Be Troubled? Seriously?

DATE: September 20, 2020

SCRIPTURE: John 14:1-11

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

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Last week, Jim asked the question, "What do you do when you don't understand Jesus?" What do you do when you can't make sense of what he's saying or doing in your life? I think this is one of THE most important questions a follower of Jesus has to wrestle to the ground—b/c—if there's one thing about a life of faith in a God we cannot see—it's this—*As much as we wish* everything was cut-and-dried—*as much as we wish* for unmistakable clarity and direction about...who to marry, what college to attend, what vocation to pursue, what job to take, which neighborhood to live in—the *truth is*—there's more to God that we don't know than we do know—and you have to get comfortable with that. *God's ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts higher than our thoughts—as Isaiah, the prophet reminds us*—and following Jesus sometimes means following him into the unknown of his higher ways.

The Confusion Over What Jesus Says (13:21-28) ~ Let's review. Jesus and his disciples are in an upstairs room of someone's home. They are there to observe Passover, what we call The Last Supper. Jesus says some very disturbing/confusing things during this meal. First, he says, "one of you will betray me" (13:21). Then he says, "I am going away, and you can't follow me" (13:33). Then he tells Peter, "Before the rooster crows in the morning, you will deny me three times" (13:38). Not only is Peter blown away by all this, but so is everyone else. They're shell-shocked. Every man in the room is shaken to the core. A betrayer in their midst? Jesus is leaving them? Peter will deny Jesus 3X before tomorrow morning? They can't understand anything Jesus is saying.

The Call to Trust What Jesus Says (14:2-4) ~ Jesus says, "Don't be troubled by all this. Believe in me the same way you believe in God" (v2). He's saying—"Don't try to figure all this out right now. Don't lean on your own understanding. Don't let the fact that you can't make sense of what is happening overwhelm you, so you lose faith in me." Okay, but what exactly were they/are we supposed to trust? To trust Jesus is to trust in what he says—in what he promises. It means to take him at his word. Later he will say, "In this world, you have trouble" (cf 16:33). Taking these two together, he's saying, "In this world, you will have troubles, but don't be troubled, trust me." It's not trusting that "bad" things won't happen. It's not trusting that everything will always make sense. It's trusting Jesus—in what he promises us—that gets us through the trouble with our faith intact. There are eight promises from here to the end of the chapter. Faith-strengthening promises that he wants them to hold on to b/c they are promises that can calm the emotional overwhelm we sometimes feel. We will only look at the first promise this week.

The First Promise (14:2-4) ~ These comforting verses are most often taken as Jesus' promise to take us to heaven when we die. Another popular way to understand this promise is that, at the Second Coming of Christ, Jesus will return and take us to the new heaven and new earth. There is truth in both of these, but not the whole truth. The question is—"How would those disciples come to understand this promise?" Was Jesus simply saying—"Don't be troubled. Trust me. I'm going to heaven to build you a mansion, but I'll come back and take you to heaven when you die" ??? *Was that how those disciples would have heard this promise?* I don't think so. Jesus is speaking figuratively, not literally here, as he will say later in 16:25-30. Here's how I would paraphrase what Jesus promises these men *and us* in vv1-3—*IF*—he was speaking plainly and not in a figure of speech—*something like*—"I know that the things that I've said to you tonight are

disturbing. I know you are confused and worried and afraid. But, don't let your emotions overpower you. Trust what I'm telling you—b/c you see—it's to your advantage that I go to the Father. In the Father's presence, there is room for all of you. I'm preparing the way for you to have a permanent abiding place in his presence. I'm going to die and come back to life—to open the way for you to enjoy a relationship with God the way I have enjoyed life with God. Trust me; I will come back to you in the Person of the Holy Spirit. And I'll not only be *with* you; I'll be *in* all of you forever." Something like that. (The sermon explains why this interpretation fits the context and the meaning of the words Jesus used in these verses.)

The Continuing Confusion Over What Jesus Says (15:5-10). ~ But both Thomas and Philip don't understand. How could they? Even if Jesus had spoken plainly, how could they understand until after it all happened? They had no categories to understand what was about to happen. Thomas was still hung up over where Jesus was going. Jesus said, "you know the way to where I'm going?" Not, you know where I'm going, but "you know the way to where I'm going." Thomas is scratching his head. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except 'thru me.'" The point is, "I am going back to the Father, and I am the way to the Father." Philip picks up on this, and he says, "Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough for us." Jesus replies, "Seriously, Philip? I've been with you all this time, and you still don't know me—that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words you've heard from me are the Father's words. The works I've done are his works." And this leads to the bookend for these first 11 verses—

The Second Call to Trust Jesus' Promises (5:11). ~ "Believe me—trust me—that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." Compare this to v1—vv1 and 11 bookend this part of the conversation.

Here's the big idea: When you are confused, when you don't understand what God is up to, when it looks like things are going to get really bad when you are anxious and afraid, Jesus calls you to believe in him and trust his promises. John wants us our confidence to be anchored in Jesus and his promises, not shaken by what we don't understand.

I'll close by *echoing one* of Jim's points from last week—two closing thoughts—First, when you are confused about what God is doing in your life—mark it down—you will not always be able to "figure God out" through the lens of what makes sense to you. Second, when you are confused about what God is doing in your life—look at everything through the lens of the faithfulness of Jesus.

So, in the midst of what troubles you—let not your troubles overwhelm you—put your trust in Jesus—hold tight to his promises—count on his faithfulness—he has pledged himself with an oath to be faithful to you—to be with you and in you and for you—whether you understand what he's doing or not.

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#### Discussion Starters — Have someone read 14:1-11 —

- How do you feel when someone tells you that you shouldn't feel a certain way? When was the last time someone told you that? (Feel free to change the names of the guilty to protect them )
- Going back to 13:21, Jesus has been saying some very disturbing things. What are those things? Spend some time sharing how troubled and confused these men must have been to hear all this?
- Think—Jesus has initiated all this, hasn't he? He's said things knowing they can't understand them. He's even speaking in figurative language, which makes it even harder for them to understand. What could he possibly be up to?
- In our passage, when Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled," do you think he's saying, "Don't feel troubled by your troubles? If not, what is he saying?
- In what does Jesus want us to put our faith? According to the interpretation of vv2-4 that was unpacked in the message, how were these men to understand Jesus' promise here? How should we, on this side of the Cross, the Resurrection, and Pentecost, understand Jesus' promise?
- Even with this promise, they still don't understand—the confusion continues. What are Thomas and Philip hung up about? How is what they say alike, and how are they different?
- Ultimately, what is Jesus' answer to their confusion? (v11) How does v11 connect back to v1?
- What are you going through right now / what are you wrestling with right now that you just can't make sense? You don't understand what Jesus is saying or doing in your life? What does it mean for you to trust him? How are you to trust him so that what troubles you doesn't overwhelm you?