

August 11, 2019

John 14:1-27

"Truth for Troubled Times"

We ended last week with Jesus' statement, "And you know the way to where I am going." His statement is within the context of times when trouble strikes. We live in a fallen and broken world. There is evil all around us. In John 14, Jesus talks us through what will hold us together when it feels like things are falling apart. We ended with the question, "Do you know the way to where Jesus is going?"

That's where we're going to pick things up today. What were your thoughts on that question?

Jesus says, *and you know the way to where I am going.*

Thomas then says, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Thinking ahead, some of you probably remember when Thomas had doubts about the claim from other disciples that they had

seen the Risen Christ. He's been kind of smeared with the title *Doubting Thomas*. But the question he asks Jesus here isn't unreasonable or misguided. I find it a logical question. "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Put yourself in the place of the disciples. Jesus is preparing something big for them. It's going to be big. Really big. It's the promise of something so big, all your troubles will pale in comparison.

Imagine for a moment you get an invitation to the greatest dinner party ever. It is a globetrotting feast lasting days. You'll be flown to Hawaii for appetizers. Fresh fruits, marinated meats, glazed pork and pineapple buns, and, of course, grilled fruit kabobs. What's an appetizer course without some kind of kabob, right? Then it's off to Texas for some of the best barbeque around. Finally, the dessert leg of the trip takes you to Chicago for some decadent *Eli's Cheesecake*. Then it's back to Michigan for late night *Cherry Republic* snack mix. Sounds great, right? All expenses paid. It costs you nothing. Then at the bottom of the invitation it says, "You know where we are going to meet. See you there." Wait, what? I don't know

where we are going to meet. This is the first time I've ever heard of, let alone received, such an offer. So, you'd probably answer back, "Where are we meeting? I want to be there."

Thomas' question to Jesus is starting to sound a lot more reasonable, right? Thomas says, "How do we know the way?" Thomas is just being honest. Have you ever known someone who acted like they understood something or already knew something because they didn't want to look ignorant or uninformed? That's not Thomas. He asks a reasonable question.

And Jesus shows his love and respect and compassion for Thomas with his answer. Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Jesus is saying the way is a person. Not a principle or a plan or a list of rules or inner sincerity or a feeling or even a religion. The way is a person. And his name is Jesus.

Jesus is the way. Jesus Christ is the way to joyful, meaningful, purposeful earthly life. And Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. Jesus Christ is the way to God. Jesus is not just a teacher. Or a social justice activist. Or a prophet. Or an example of how to live life. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. Let's say that together:

Jesus Christ is the way, and the truth, and the life.

Don't miss the biggest point here. Jesus is the only way. "No one comes to the Father except through me." That's an exclusive claim. Another time, Jesus said the road is narrow. Some people look at verse 6 and think it's narrow minded. How can we say Jesus is the only way?

Here are some thoughts on verse 6.

First, the truth is narrow. Several things can't be true at the same time.

There are all kinds of narrow ways in life.

Back in late May I had a cracked tooth with exposed nerve. There is only one way to treat it. Root canal and repair. There aren't several ways that

will lead to the same result. There is only one way to the desired result. My dentist wasn't being narrow minded when she outlined the process. She presented the only way to take care of the problem. If your dentist describes a totally different approach, then you need a new dentist.

The truth is narrow. Some people think there's a whole lot of different ways to God. There's no real truth. Truth is kind of spongy. But the truth is, Jesus really came into this world. We are sinful people. We have troubled hearts. There's truth to it. Jesus is the only way.

So, where are we? Jesus says, *you want hope for a troubled heart?* There is a way and there is a truth and there is a life, and it's Jesus. And if you'll attach yourself to me...if you'll believe in me...if you'll love me, then you can have security in your heart.

But there's more. While the way to eternal security is narrow, it's an all-inclusive offer. In other words, the offer isn't limited to a specific group, people, nation or tribe. Anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior finds the way and the truth and the life. {Amen?} It's not ethnic. It's

not cultural. It's not limited to one time in history. The offer is for everybody. Jesus is the way for anyone who will follow him.

After Thomas' question, it's now Philip's turn. **John 14:8-11** says:

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."

Thomas asked one of the simplest and greatest questions in the New Testament. And he got a great answer. Philip, on the other hand, asks a not-so-smart question. You know the cliché, "There's no such thing as a stupid question." This might be the exception.

Do you want to have hope of heaven? Get to know Jesus Christ. The better you get to know Jesus the more real heaven becomes. How do you get

over your troubled heart? How do you get ready for those times of a troubled heart? Get to know Jesus now. If we get to know Jesus now, it builds hope and promise into our lives. And so, when trouble comes, we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God through Jesus Christ, because Jesus has already prepared a place in heaven for us.

Here's the second most important thing you can do when your heart is troubled:

Obey God.

When you are troubled, rewind your mind back to the simple advice of Jesus. Obey God. Sometimes when my heart is troubled, I fall into the pattern of retreating into myself. I dwell on my hurts or my troubles or my challenges. I sink into myself. Have you ever been there? When trouble starts, it's so easy to turn inward. But Jesus says we need to obey him.

Obey.

Obey. That's not a popular word. Dog obedience training - a good thing.

Military training emphasizes obeying orders. Children should almost always obey their parents. One summer, heading out west on vacation, when our

boys were in elementary school, we stopped for the night at a hotel with a pool. Kids love pools. Me, my wife, and our oldest son watched, in horror, as a kid in the pool threw up. Our youngest was blithely unaware, swimming toward the gross disaster. We yelled, "Zach, stop right now. Start swimming to us. Now." For an agonizing moment, it seemed like he was going to be a bit rebellious, but then he obeyed. Smart boy.

Sometimes it's a good thing to obey.

Think about how beautiful the word *obey* is in the Bible. Every beautiful thing you see is the result of obedience to God. Start with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus obediently went to the cross, he won our salvation. Think about everything you see in nature. Obedience to the Word of God at creation. God rejoices in our obedience.

Does that mean we will never have troubles, problems, or difficulties? Of course not. Life can be very painful or hurtful or woeful. But what does Jesus say? "Let not your hearts be troubled." So when you're going through troubling times, keep joy in your heart. Don't let things bring you

down. Don't give in to discouragement. *Rejoice in the Lord always...again I say rejoice*, says Paul. Do that. Guard your heart against discouragement or cynicism or despondency. Obey Jesus Christ. Even when times are tough, keep joy in your heart. Think about it this way...do you want troubled times to control or defeat your attitude in Christ?

When your heart is troubled, and you allow it to keep being troubled, do you ever wonder why? What's the pay-off? What's the benefit to being downcast or discouraged? What do you gain by being angry? What do you gain by being disheartened? What do you gain with negativity or complaining or griping? These are all legitimate questions. Jesus must know the answer is you gain nothing because he says, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

First, Jesus says the truth is narrow. Second, Jesus says obey God. Finally, Jesus says, if you've got a troubled heart:

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.

Jesus gives us peace. But it's different from the kind of peace the world gives. The way of the world is in order to get something you have to give something. If I want "peace of mind" as far as insuring my belongings, I have to pay the insurance company. That's the way of the world. But not Jesus. Jesus gives us his peace because he loves us. Jesus' peace means he's going to be in your life. You'll have a presence and a purpose you never dreamed of. **You will have a calmness about you when all others around you are suffocating in hardship or shame.** When you are in Christ, you receive his peace, and you will know his way. {Amen?}

Think of something you're facing that's troubling your heart right now. While you're thinking of the trouble in your heart, you also need to remember the promises of Jesus Christ. Jesus says he will come back and take you to him. There may be times when you feel useless. Jesus says you will do great things in his name. There is nothing in this world that can take from us the ability to obey Jesus. Nothing. Jesus will love us. Jesus will give us peace.

Here's a homework assignment. Call it a prescription for a troubled heart.

Read John 14 once a night, before you go to sleep. See what it does for your heart the next morning when you put the promises of Jesus Christ in your heart.