

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
May 15, 2022
5th Sunday of Easter
Scripture: John 14: 1-6

Sermon: Troubled Hearts

There is almost nothing more comforting than the presence of someone you love when you feel sick or injured or emotionally suffering. Having someone with you who knows you and loves you can ease the pain. Even knowing someone loves you and is praying for you from afar can help ease the pain and burden, knowing you are not alone. For many facing death, comfort can be found in the promise of being with their loved ones again in eternity.

The promise of heaven is important to many whether they have been on the battlefields on foreign lands or lying in bed at home or in the hospital struggling with their health. The promise of heaven has also brought comfort to those left behind that death is not the final separation.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 says that we are not to grieve like people who have no hope because, if we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

John 13 tells about the conversation that Jesus had with his disciples in the Upper Room on the night before he was crucified. During the Passover meal, the disciples started arguing again about who was the greatest among them. Jesus rebuked them for it, explaining again that greatness in God's kingdom was about serving, not position and power. Jesus then washed their feet and told them to follow his example of humble service to others.

Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment that changed the standard of love for His disciples. The new standard would be to love one another as Jesus loved them, which is much greater in scope, depth, patience and length, and it would show others that they were disciples of Jesus.

In John 14, Jesus comforts the disciples, and he teaches them about what they will be doing while he is away. These are truths that comfort us as well.

The hearts of the disciples were troubled, agitated, disturbed, disquieted, so Jesus begins with a command to “not be troubled any longer.”

In the beginning of Chapter 14, Jesus anticipates the sorrow of his disciples’ breaking hearts. Martin Luther called this passage “the best and most comforting sermon that the Lord Christ delivered on earth, a treasure and a jewel not to be purchased with the world’s goods.”

These verses become the foundation for comfort, not only for these disciples, but also for us.

Jesus, fully divine but fully human, anticipating the most horrible kind of experience, is unconcerned at this point about His own experience and totally concerned about the needs of his friends.

There is a message in Jesus’ words to all of us, trusting faith. The reason the disciples were so stirred up is that they had begun to focus on their problems, and they didn’t seem to be able to put their trust in Jesus. So, in these verses, Jesus reminds them of the importance of trusting in him. They had left all to follow him and now Jesus is telling them that he is going to leave them. Nothing seemed to fit. What good was a Messiah who was going to die? Jesus knew what they were each thinking. Jesus could read their hearts. The disciples couldn’t feel his pain, but he could feel theirs.

All the time Jesus was comforting the sheep he knew the sheep were going to be scattered. Jesus said, ***“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”*** (v 1)

What Jesus is saying is, “You can trust my presence.” He wanted the disciples to understand that, even though he was leaving them physically, his presence would be with them spiritually. He would be leaving, but they had and would always have access to God.

In John 20:29 after Jesus' resurrection, he said to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

He was trying all these years with his disciples to get across the idea that his visible presence was not nearly as significant as an understanding of his spiritual presence and who Jesus is.

"Let not your heart be troubled" is Jesus telling the disciples to "Stop being troubled in your heart. You are forgetting who I am. You believe in God; believe also in me. You are not alone; I am with you. You are secure because I am."

Jesus didn't promise them their troubles were going away. He told them he would be with them in the midst of their troubles. He would be their stabilizing force and strength. He did not tell them or us that pain, suffering, evil and sin wouldn't exist in our lives because we follow him but that he would be there with us in the valley of the shadow of death, and he would prepare a place for us in heaven when we die.

There is a story of a dying man who asked his Christian doctor to tell him something about the place to which he was going. As the doctor fumbled for a reply, he heard a scratching at the door, and then he had his answer. "Do you hear that?" he asked his patient. "It's my dog. I left him downstairs, but he has grown impatient, and has come up and hears my voice. He has no idea of what is behind the door, but he knows that I am here. Isn't it the same with you? You don't know what lies beyond the Door, but you know that your Master is there."

It is a comfort to believe in Jesus. It is a comfort that Jesus has prepared a place for us. This verse gives us a brief glimpse of what heaven will be like and that we belong there.

A pastor by the name of Don Piper died on January 18, 1989 in a car accident involving a tracker trailer and spent 90 minutes in heaven. He was pronounced dead and another pastor waiting in the line of cars came over to Don Piper's car and prayed for the person inside, not knowing who was dead in the car. He sang, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," and suddenly, after 90 minutes, Don Piper began singing. His chest, legs, and arms had been injured and almost completely crushed by the truck. He

had entered into heaven that day and had seen loved ones and relatives but hadn't gone through the gates when he heard singing.

After a year of recovery, he preached at the pastor's church of the man who had prayed for him that day in the car and sang to him. The pastor's wife said to Don Piper after church,

"I enjoyed hearing your testimony this morning. I know it wasn't easy for you—" "No, it wasn't." "There's just one thing. The part where you talked about Dick holding your hand and praying for you—" I nodded. "That didn't happen." "I have many gaps in my memory, Anita, and some of my facts come from those who were there. But of one thing I am absolutely positive. I vividly remember holding his hand. That's what inspired me to hold on. I remember—" "You were holding a hand as Dick prayed." She peered intently at me. "But it wasn't Dick's hand." I don't know if I protested or stared silently. "But how—" "No one could have reached your hand while you were trapped inside your car. You were twisted so far to the right that your right hand was actually on the floor of the passenger's side." She paused and I nodded. "Dick reached through the back window of your car." "That's correct and—" "Dick placed his right arm between the front seats and your right shoulder—your unbroken arm." "That's right—" "Your right hand was beyond Dick's reach."

I stared at her uncomprehendingly. "But I remember the hand—it was so powerful. I know a hand grasped mine. I drew enormous strength and help from that hand. It gave me the power to hang on." "There was a hand all right." She paused and added, "But it wasn't Dick's."

"If it wasn't Dick's hand, whose hand was it?" "I believe you know." Just then I understood. God sent one of His ministering spirits—an angel—not only to hold my hand but also to infuse me with a will to live. There had been three of us inside that demolished car. It had been a heavenly trio.

John 14:6, Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me."

Jesus makes three statements about himself and uses "the" instead of "A." He is not A way, but THE WAY; not A truth, but THE TRUTH; not A

life, but THE LIFE. For many in the world Jesus is just “a way,” but not “the way.”

Jesus is the means to a destination. Jesus is much more than someone who teaches the way, or guides in the way, or shows the way to live. Jesus says that he is THE WAY. The way to God is knowing the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Truth. We live in an age when people no longer believe they can know the truth. People have been told so many lies in the world it is difficult to know the truth. Truth has become relative in our day. Even Pilate asked that question in John 18:30 nearly 2,000 years ago—“What is truth?” The answer is here in John 14:6. Jesus Christ is the truth. It is the truth that sanctifies us, guides us, and sets us free. Truth is not an IT, but the person of Jesus Christ. Any person that is serious about searching for truth will find that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of that search.

Jesus is the Life. This refers to that which is eternal, the breath or the soul. Jesus is the source and giver of this life to those that believe in Him. Jesus promises to give life and to give it abundantly.

Jesus gives life to all his followers, but it isn't always a life of ease and pleasures. It is a life of promises filled with joy that transcends our circumstances of life.

A troubled heart finds comfort by faith in Jesus and his promises for both this life and for eternity.

In Christ, all things work together for good for those that love him and are called according to His purposes. (Romans 8:28)

We no longer have to fear death for Jesus has won the victory by conquering the grave and promises eternal life to us.

There is Hope for the Troubled Heart! Just trust and believe.