

Sam Storms
Bridgeway Church
John 13-17 / # 6
June 19, 2016

Sermon Summary #6

Jesus Christ: The Cure for Troubled Hearts John 14:1-11

I had originally planned on beginning today with a question, until I realized it was a silly question, the answer to which is always, “Yes.” But just because it is a silly question and everyone will always respond with the same answer, doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be asked. So here goes: ***“Do you ever find yourself troubled in heart?”***

Some of you may be inclined to say more than simply, “Yes,” and answer by saying, “Always.” I can understand that. It’s virtually impossible in today’s world not to be troubled in one’s heart. It troubles me that 49 people in Orlando entered eternity at the hands of a deranged terrorist, most of whom probably did not know Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). It troubles me that human beings can be so indescribably selfish and insensitive to the problems that others face. It troubles me that some in our church family are unable to conceive and bear children. It troubles me that some who do conceive, later miscarry. It troubles me that marriages disintegrate with the alarming consistency that they do. It troubles me to think that my children and grand-children must grow up in a world that seems to be coming apart at the seams, morally, politically, religiously, economically.

And it deeply troubles me that there are so many of you with troubled hearts. I’m troubled that I find myself so inadequate to help you move out of your troubled state of mind and heart and soul and into the satisfaction and contentment and excitement of believing and trusting and investing your hope in the one Person who can bring you peace in the midst of conflict, and joy in the midst of sorrow, and hope in the midst of despair.

Jesus was troubled in his heart that his disciples were troubled in theirs. The reasons why they were troubled in heart are many, but let me mention only those that appear in John 13, a chapter that we concluded last week.

They were deeply troubled when Jesus said that one of their own number would betray him. Not one of the Pharisees or one of the Jewish Sanhedrin or one of the soldiers in the Roman army. No, it was one of the twelve, one of those who had been with Jesus for three years. A close and trusted friend would betray him. They undoubtedly looked around the room and asked themselves: “Could it be me? Is it him? Surely it isn’t James or Andrew or Matthew or Peter? Who could it be?”

They were deeply troubled each time Jesus alluded to the fact that he was about to depart from them. They were troubled in heart when Jesus said in John 13:33 that they were not able to come with him where he is going. They were troubled when he told Peter that notwithstanding his loud affirmation of loyalty that he would betray him three times.

Jesus obviously knew how troubled they were, because he later in John 14 repeats himself almost verbatim: “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*” (John 14:27).

There were countless other reasons why the disciples were troubled in heart. Their anxiety and agitation could be traced to the increasing opposition they were facing. They were troubled because Jesus had said that with him the kingdom of God had arrived but it didn’t come in the way they had hoped. Rome was still in charge. Israel was still occupied. It was unsettling to them that Jesus spoke so often of the coming persecution they would endure (John 15:20). Jesus would later tell them (John 15:18ff.) that the world is going to hate them and that many of them will be killed (John 16:2).

The emotional turmoil and distress that you feel each day may not be the same as that experienced by the disciples who sat with Jesus in the upper room, but the cure for you is the same as it was for them. There is a cure, there is a healing remedy for those who are troubled in their hearts. But it may not be what you would expect.

Jesus doesn't say to them: "Let not your hearts be troubled because I will always make it possible for you to escape and elude the difficult days that lie ahead. Don't be troubled, because if you can simply muster up enough faith you will be elevated above the ordinary struggles that others face. You will be spared physical affliction. You will be spared financial stress. You will be spared the disdain of your co-workers. You will experience triumph in every arena of life. So don't let your hearts be troubled."

Well, no. That's not what Jesus said. What, then, is the remedy or the cure for the troubled heart? Regardless of the cause or the circumstances that lead to a troubled heart, irrespective of whether we're talking about men and women who lived in the first century or the twenty-first, how does one overcome a trouble heart, a disconsolate soul, a wounded spirit?

The answer Jesus gives is straight to the point: me. The cure for troubled hearts is Jesus. Let's look closely at how he makes this clear. If that sounds overly simplistic, almost trite, bear with me as we unpack what it is that Jesus is actually saying.

"Believe in God. Believe also in Me."

There it is in John 14:1. ***The remedy or cure for what troubles the human heart is belief or trust in Jesus.*** This belief or trust that Jesus commands is not saving faith. These to whom he speaks are already saved. Jesus has declared back in John 13:10 that they are already "clean" or forgiven of their sins. So this is not a gospel appeal. Jesus isn't urging them to trust him for salvation and reconciliation to the Father.

He is calling for them to trust him in the same way they trust God the Father. In case you hadn't thought about it, that's an incredibly high and lofty claim. To put himself on the same plane with Yahweh, in effect saying that he is as worthy and deserving of the trust of the human heart as Yahweh, is a clear indication that Jesus knows precisely who he is. He is God in human flesh. His exhortation that they trust him clearly points to his deity. He unashamedly claims for himself a place of equal authority and divinity with the Father.

But what specifically is he asking that they "believe" about him? What is he asking that they trust? I think he's urging them to believe and trust and invest their confident hope in who he is as a person, in what he is about to do on their behalf on the cross, and especially that they believe and trust in the truth of all that he has taught them during their time together these past three years and what he is about to teach them about himself and the future.

Five Reasons to Believe and Trust in Jesus

In fact, Jesus gives them and us five reasons to "believe" and "trust" him.

(1) The first reason we should trust Jesus is because he is a man of perfect integrity. He does not lie. He pulls no punches. He tells it like it is. He doesn't soft sell things just to gain a following. He doesn't sugar coat what is about to happen but is forthright and honest. He commands them to trust him just as they trust the Father because he is not one who lies to his followers. "I am faithful to my word," says Jesus, "so trust me when I tell you this.

Here is how he put it in vv. 2-3 –

"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

As I mentioned earlier, the disciples were in great distress over the fact that Jesus repeatedly told them he would be leaving (see John 13:33, 36). His death was imminent. His point here in vv. 2-3 is simply that ***they should not be troubled by his departure because in going he will prepare a place for each of them in his Father's house and that he will come again and take them to himself. They will not be abandoned forever. They will soon be with him wherever he is.***

The references to Jesus “coming” in John’s gospel sometimes point to his return to the disciples after his resurrection, sometimes to his coming to them by means of the Holy Spirit whom he will send to them, and sometimes to his second coming at the end of history. I believe here Jesus is talking about his second coming.

His point is this: “You can trust me on this. If it were not the case that there is a place for each of you in my Father’s house I would never have told you that I’m going there to prepare everything for you. Have I ever lied to you before? Of course, not. And I’m not lying now.”

The word translated “mansions” in the KJV more accurately points to “rooms” within a dwelling place. The “Father’s house” probably refers to heaven. His point is that there is more than enough space for everyone who trusts Jesus.

This was especially relevant to those who were sharing this final meal with Jesus. They didn’t fully understand why Jesus had to leave. And they didn’t understand why they couldn’t go with him. Why should they be left to suffer hatred and persecution? And Jesus puts their troubled hearts at rest by saying: “Don’t panic! Don’t lose control! Don’t let fear and anxiety overtake your hearts. My Father’s house is big enough for everyone who trusts me and follows me. God will never run out of space for his people. Each of you will have a room there.”

Of course, we shouldn’t press the imagery too far. Jesus doesn’t want us to think of heaven as one big mansion or hotel with numerous bedrooms, one each for all of God’s children. It’s an analogy Jesus employed to reassure them and us that no one who follows him will be excluded. There is ample room for all.

So, says Jesus: “Yes. I’m leaving. And No, you can’t come with me now. Later tonight you will all be overcome with fear. Peter will deny me three times and the rest of you will scatter into the darkness. But don’t let fear or shame or sadness overtake your souls. Let not your hearts be troubled. For in my departure I will prepare a place for each of you; not only you who are here with me in the upper room, but for each and every one who believes in me for eternal life and forgiveness of sins.”

(2) There’s a second reason why neither they nor we should be troubled in our hearts. And that is because Jesus promises us here that he will return for us so that we might be with him forever. Jesus will not prepare a place and then sit down and wait for his followers to figure out a way to get there on their own. He will personally return and come for them so they can be with him there. Paul made this same point in 1 Thessalonians 4.

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so ***we will always be with the Lord.*** Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Furthermore, it is in the going itself that Jesus prepares the place for his disciples. That is, his death and resurrection open the way for the followers of Christ to go to heaven, to the Father. In other words, the sense in which Jesus can say that the “place” is not yet prepared is that he has not yet atoned for their sin. He has not yet overcome and defeated Satan. He has not yet satisfied and suffered the wrath of God in our place. He has not yet ascended into heaven and taken his seat at the right hand of God.

Jesus must still overcome and remove every obstacle to our acceptance into his Father’s presence. And that is precisely what he is about to do. Therefore, neither the disciples in the upper room that night nor you and I today should have any turmoil or fear or anxiety in our hearts that we will not finally make our way into the glorious heavenly presence of God. Don’t let your sin or guilt or sense of unworthiness cause trouble to your heart. Jesus is this very night starting down the path that will lead to the cross to obtain our forgiveness and thus prepare a place for us with him and the Father forever.

If you are struggling to understand the imagery of a “house” in which there are “rooms” for all who know and trust Jesus, put that aside and listen again to what he is saying. He is going to do everything necessary to prepare a place for us, and that place is ***“with” him! What is heaven? Heaven is wherever Jesus is.*** The ultimate purpose of God is to bring heaven to earth, as we read in Revelation 21-22. There will be a new heaven established on a new and redeemed earth. Listen to how John describes it:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away’” (Revelation 21:1-4).

The focus of heaven isn't on a place. It's on a person! The essence of heaven is the presence of Christ! It isn't streets of gold or pearly gates. It's Christ! This passage in John's gospel is not the promise of a return to heaven but of a reunion with Christ! Trust me that I am coming for you. Trust me that no matter what you suffer in this life you will find eternal satisfaction in the next

(3) The third reason Jesus gives for why they and we should believe him and trust him and not be troubled in heart is found in vv. 4-6. So let's read it together.

You can see that this bit of conversation is provoked by the confusion of Thomas. Evidently Thomas interpreted the words “place” and “way” quite literally. He says to Jesus: “How can we possibly know the way you are going if we don't know the destination?” Or again, “How can we know the way to get ‘there’ if we don't know what ‘there’ is?”

So Jesus immediately clarifies for him. The “where” is the Father's presence. That's where I'm taking you. And the only “way” for you to get there is through me.

Jesus is the “way” to God precisely because he alone embodies and tells the “truth” about who God is and what is needed to be reconciled to him. He alone embodies the true and consummate revelation of the Father.

When Jesus says that reconciliation to the Father comes only ***“through me”*** we must define what he means in light of the broader context of John's gospel. And everywhere in John we are told over and over again that you must believe in Jesus. You must trust him alone. You must look to his work on the cross as your only hope. For example:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18).

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:36).

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst’” (John 6:35).

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38).

“Jesus said to her [to Martha], ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die’” (John 11:25-26; see also 12:46 and 17:20).

That's what it means to come to the Father “through” the Son. It means you believe Jesus is who he said he is and that what he will do on the cross for sinners is the only hope you have for forgiveness of sins.

But might there be other pathways to the Father? Why is there **only** one? We don't deserve **any** pathway to the Father, much less one. The fact that God has provided **a** way through his Son is a miracle of divine mercy.

But won't other religions do the same thing? Can't we climb the same mountain but by a different road? Can't we arrive at the same destination but by different means of transportation: some by car, some on foot, some by plane, others by bus? No. There is only one way, the way that God himself has ordained.

So note well: Jesus does not point us to the way or describe for us how to get there. He does not show the way. He *is* the way.

That he is the truth means that those who search for truth apart from Christ are destined for failure and will only find what is false. Jesus is not one of multiple, equally valid and effective ways to the Father. He does not just have some truth. He *is* truth. He does not direct them where they might find eternal life. He *is* life.

Why, then, when our hearts are troubled, should we believe Jesus? The answer is simple: because he and he alone is the way to the Father; he and he alone is the embodiment of ultimate and unassailable truth; he and he alone is life itself. To know and trust him is to live. All else is death.

(4) There is a fourth reason Jesus gives for why he should be believed and trusted. It is found in vv. 7-11. Look at it again with me.

I suspect that Philip was a bit impatient with our Lord. Jesus had just said in v. 7 that they had already seen the Father and that they know him. Philip is confused. "When did I ever see the Father? How can you say that I know him? I want to. In fact, I want it now."

It's as if he says to Jesus: "I don't want to wait until you leave and prepare a place for us with you and your Father forever. I want it **now!** My heart hurts **now!** I want relief from this distress and confusion in my soul **now!** Show me the Father **now!** If you'll do that, I'll stop complaining. It will be enough for me."

To which Jesus then makes this astounding reply:

"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

In other words, the fourth reason Jesus gives for why they should trust him and not be troubled in their hearts is that ***the Father, who has a place for each of them in his eternal presence, is already with them. He's right here, says Jesus, in me.***

They really do know the Father. They just don't recognize it yet. They haven't fully grasped that in knowing Jesus they have come to know the Father. In Jesus God has made himself known: definitively, gloriously, and visibly.

Seven times, in vv. 7-11, Jesus says virtually the same thing over and over again. I and my Father are so much one in nature and character and purpose that my presence is the Father's presence. Look at how repetitive Jesus is:

"If you had known me, you would have known my Father also" (v. 7a).

"From now on you do know him and have seen him" (v. 7b).

"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?" (v. 9a).

"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (v. 9b).

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" (v. 10a).

"The Father who dwells in me does his works" (v. 10b).

"I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (v. 11a).

So, if you've ever wondered what the God the Father thinks about **death**, look at Jesus, weeping at the tomb of Lazarus.

If you've ever wondered what God the Father thinks about your **sin**, look at Jesus, dying in your place so that you might be forgiven.

If you've ever wondered how God the Father feels about **social outcasts** who are shunned by everyone in society, look at Jesus reaching out and actually touching lepers and making them clean. Look at Jesus sitting down at a meal with prostitutes, sending them on their way forgiven, full of joy, and for the first time in their lives, feeling clean.

If you've ever wondered how God the Father thinks about **religious hypocrisy**, listen to Jesus denounce the Pharisees in righteous anger.

If you've ever wondered what God the Father thinks about **disease** and paralysis and blindness and deafness, watch as Jesus heals all who are brought to him.

If you've ever doubted whether or not God the Father **loves** you, listen to Jesus in John 13:2 who loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the very end.

If you've ever questioned how low God the Father might go in **servicing** you, look at Jesus on his knees washing the filthy feet of his disciples.

If you've wanted to know how God the Father feels about **exploiting religion for personal monetary gain**, watch Jesus as he explodes in the Temple, turning over tables, and rebuking those who turned the house of prayer into a den of thieves.

If you've wondered what God the Father is like in **the depths of his heart**, look closely at the mercy of Jesus, look at his kindness and authority and power and compassion and joy and peace. Look at and listen and watch and meditate on all that Jesus is, says, and does.

"Philip, Mark, Barbara, Sally, Dave, Abigail, Sam, Megan, Donna, whatever your name, whatever your need, listen once more to Jesus when he says: 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.'"

Some of you may respond by saying: "That doesn't help me **right now**. My heart is troubled **right now**. I need Jesus here **right now**. But he's gone. He is with his Father in heaven."

Which brings us to one last reason why our hearts should not be troubled. But to see this reason we have to skip down to vv. 16-18 of John 14. And when Jesus says what he does here, he's not just talking to the disciples in the upper room. He's talking to you and me as well.

(5) The fifth and final reason not to be troubled in heart but instead to trust Jesus is because he is still very much with us, even today. How can that be, you ask? Is he not in heaven at the right hand of God? Yes, but look at John 14:16-18.

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16-18).

What's he talking about? He's talking about the Holy Spirit! Although Jesus will leave physically and ascend into heaven, he "will come" to all his followers in the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ dwells within you because his Spirit is in you. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ! Yes, Christ will come again, personally and physically to take us to himself. But in the meantime we must never think he has abandoned us or left us all alone. We are not orphans in this world. ***He is fully and perfectly and lovingly and powerfully here in the person of the Holy Spirit!***

And that is yet again why we must believe and trust him. That is why yet again we should not be troubled in our hearts. It doesn't matter the crisis you are facing. It doesn't matter the pain you feel. It doesn't matter how lonely life is. Jesus, who perfectly embodies and expresses all that is true of the Father, is here with you and in you in the person of the Holy Spirit.