

I AM: The Way, The Truth, and The Life

John 14:1-7

April 21, 2013

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'Little children I am with you but a little longer. You will seek Me... [but] Where I am going, you cannot come.'

These are the words Jesus gives His disciples at the end of John chapter 13. Imagine hearing those words. Imagine having spent three years with Jesus during which time you were with Him virtually every day. You have grown to love Him; you have grown to believe in Him. And now all of a sudden Jesus is talking about leaving you.

What would be going through your mind? I'd be questioning. I'd be wondering what Jesus could possibly be talking about. Perhaps if I was bold enough I might even shoot my mouth off like Peter and claim "Lord, why can't I follow You right now? I'll do anything for You. I'll even die for You!"

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If you have been with us over the last several weeks you know that we are going through the book of John and taking a close look at the seven times that Jesus makes I AM claims about Himself. He has said "I AM the Bread of Life", "I AM the Gate", "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" and "I AM the Light of the World." And today He says "I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life".

These are all well known sayings of Jesus such that if you have been around the church for any period of time you are likely familiar with them. Yet, with that said, as we have looked at them I have to admit there is so much in these words that I had never noticed before.

And this is the way it is with the Bible in general, but specifically with the words of Jesus. You can read them in a glance and think you capture what He is saying, and then you can mine them for years and never get to the bottom.

The reason this is true is because Jesus was not just a man. When Jesus' feet hit the ground the footprints He left were the footprints of YHWH. Amen? And the words He spoke were the words of God.

Friends, my hope and prayer as I preach is that as we look through these familiar texts together we hear afresh the words of God.

I'm thirsty for the water that Jesus promises will well up within us to eternal life. And this morning I hope you are as well. Let's pray.

[Pray]

Please turn with me to John chapter 14 if you haven't already. Today the thesis that we are going to use to draw us through the text is as follows: **The antidote for a troubled heart is trust in the One who will return to take us to Heaven.**

Look with me at verse 1

[Read John 14:1a]

The antidote for a troubled heart... Chapter 14 is a continuation of a conversation Jesus was having with His disciples in chapter 13. And it is there that we learn about the source of this troubled heart.

But before we can look specifically at that, I want to point out that the word "your" in verse 1 is plural in the Greek so Jesus is addressing all His disciples, but the word "heart" is singular.

In order to really get at what Jesus is saying we need to use Southern America's English. Because what Jesus says here is "Do not let *y'all's* heart be troubled". Jesus says all of His disciples, and all of us, share one heart.

What Jesus means here is that your faith does not belong to you alone. Rather we stand or fall together as a body.

Have you ever heard of or been part of a church where someone in prominent leadership committed adultery? Sure you have – it is way more common than it should be. And what happened? The heart of that church experienced extreme trouble. No one in the church was exempt from it. Everyone's faith was shaken – indeed the faith of the entire city is shaken because we are a body, and we share one heart. Our sin affects those around us. But it isn't only sin that troubles the heart.

In fact, in chapter 13 there are 3 reasons given for why Jesus' disciples are struggling with a troubled heart.

First and most importantly in verse 33 Jesus has just told His disciples that He is leaving and going to a place where even though they are going to look for Him they aren't going to be able to find Him, nor are they going to be able to follow Him.

These words would have rocked the heart of the disciples. Remember that it wasn't until after He had died and returned to life that they really began to understand who He was. At this stage in the story they were still susceptible to thinking, like the rest of the Jews, that Jesus was going to be a military Messiah who would free them from the Romans.

So the thought that Jesus was going to leave was not a welcome thought at all. They had plans for Jesus that He hadn't fulfilled yet.

How about you? Do you have plans for Jesus that He hasn't fulfilled yet? Things in your life that you wish He would change? People in your family that you wish He would call to Himself?

I don't believe there is anything wrong with praying for these things, but we need to understand that Jesus has an agenda that is not our natural agenda. As we said two weeks ago Jesus is primarily passionate for the Father's glory (if you missed that sermon I encourage you to check it out on our website). That is something He pursued and continues to pursue at any cost.

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Most often I think we are happy to put God first in our lives as long as we think He is putting us first in His – we will scratch Your back God as long as You scratch ours – but that isn't how it works. God loves us because He loves Himself. God offers us salvation because it brings Him glory. You see God is first in God's life because He is not an idolater – He has no other gods before Himself.

Now admittedly this is not an easy concept for us self-centered North Americans to get our minds around. It is troubling even – just like it was for the disciples – to realize that Jesus isn't going to march to our beat. But if He did, it would be us, not Him, who was God.

And so the first reason that the disciples' heart was troubled was that they found out that Jesus had His own agenda.

The second reason their heart was troubled was because Peter, the leader of the disciples, the one who spoke for the group and who often shot his mouth off, had just been harshly called out by Jesus.

Just after Jesus told them He was going to leave, Peter professed his loyalty by saying:

Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.

Then Jesus answered, 'Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!' (John 13:37-38)

Peter will disown or deny Jesus three times!! This is a serious accusation and how it would have troubled the disciples...

They all knew Peter; he was their leader the first of the disciples. He was the one Jesus said:

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:18)

If Peter could fall short in this way then so could the rest of them and so could we. Friends have you found yourself denying Jesus? Have you been ashamed of your faith in front of your friends or your co-workers? Have you been reluctant to mention the name of Jesus and opted instead to be quiet? I have.

And this is greatly troubling because in Matthew 10 Jesus says:

“Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before others, I will disown before My Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:32-33)

And that is the second thing that troubled the disciples and it should trouble us too.

The third thing that troubled the heart of the disciples was the fact that there was in their midst one who would not just deny Jesus, but who would betray Him. And the disciples didn't know who Jesus was talking about, so you can imagine how shook up they would have been. In fact John tells us that even Jesus was shaken. It reads:

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.’

His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them He meant. (John 13:21-22)

There are lots of reasons for the Christian to be troubled – lots of good reasons! And yet Jesus says in verse 1 “Do not let y'all's heart be troubled.” This has to lead us to ask “why not Jesus? Why shouldn't we be troubled?”

Look again with me at verse 1

[Read John 14:1]

The antidote for a troubled heart **is trust...**

In spite of the fact Jesus is leaving, in spite of the fact Peter is denying, in spite of the fact Judas is betraying, Jesus says “don't be troubled.”

We trust God, Jesus says, so trust Him too. And this is why it is good news that God doesn't have us first in His life. Jesus' offer of salvation isn't dependent on us; it is something He offers because it brings the Father glory. And so, because His offer of salvation is dependent on Himself, we can rest assured that He will bring it to pass.

All that is required on our part is trust. But what does it mean to trust Jesus?

Well, first of all this word is often translated “believe” and this is why Romans 10 tells us:

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

But here we run into one of the difficulties in translation, because the English words "believe" or "trust" can be something we just do in our minds, and this has led many North Americans to use this verse to argue "if people simply pray the sinners prayer when they are children then they are guaranteed salvation for life." The problem is that this word is part of a multifaceted concept in the Scriptures that makes up salvation.¹

Belief is part of it, but cerebral belief isn't the whole picture. In fact James warns us that simple belief is not enough when he says:

You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. (James 2:19)

So what does it mean to trust in Jesus? The scriptures tell us that trust in Jesus must also lead us to **repentance** – leaving our sin behind and running towards God. Acts 3 says:

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out. (Acts 3:19)

Then the author of Hebrews tells us **obedience** to the commands of Christ is essential for those who claim to trust Him:

Once made perfect, [Christ] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:9)

Jesus also brings out several other aspects of what trust in Him looks like. For example He makes it clear that **childlikeness** is required for salvation when He says:

"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)

Self-denial is also a biblical condition for salvation:

"Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and for the gospel will save it. (Mark 8:34-35)

Then Jesus warns that **the love of possessions** disqualifies us from salvation:

Those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be My disciples. (Luke 14:33)

Jesus even tells us that if we want to follow Him we have to **love Him more** than we love anyone else:

¹ The following list of Scriptures comes from John Piper's "Desiring God" (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books), 2011. pg 69

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Matthew 10:37)

And these are just a few of the conditions that the Scriptures tell us are required for salvation. So trusting or believing in Jesus is bigger than just a mental exercise.

Now, if this is a new concept for you I have to tell you that I don't happen to like this – in fact I wish salvation was gained by simply saying some magic words. I just don't see how that argument can be made from Scripture.

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And that brings us to the next part of our thesis: The antidote for a troubled heart is belief in the One **who will return to take us to Heaven.**

Look with me at Jesus' words in verses 2 and following:

[Read John 14:2-4]

Jesus' words here come in direct response to the reasons the heart of the disciples is troubled. They worry because Jesus is leaving, they worry because Peter's denial is coming, and they worry because betrayal is at hand. And yet Jesus tells them Do not let your heart be troubled, trust in Me and I will bring you to Heaven!

This is a great message of hope, because if following Jesus is only for this life then it is a hopeless pursuit. If there is no great reward after death then there is no motivation to delay our gratification now. Why would we repent and obey? Why would we become like little children, or deny ourselves or give up our possessions or even our family to follow God if there is no reward beyond what we currently experience? Indeed Paul says:

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:9)

But praise the Lord, that isn't the case. Jesus' departure means preparation for our eternity. "In My Father's house there are many rooms" or "In My Father's estate there are many houses" as it could be read to say. Either way the Father is not short on real estate and we are en route to this most prized of properties.²

And this is why Jesus isn't troubled by His departure at all. In fact this is a joyous occasion for Him because it means He will return to take us to Heaven.

But what is Heaven like?...

² Adapted from Brunner, Dale. "The Gospel of John: A Commentary" (Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdman's Pub), 2012. pg 810.

Growing up I remember people stressing for me over and over again that Heaven was a place where I would receive a mansion to live in and walk streets of gold. And Jesus does mention our future dwelling being a mansion in God's estate, but that is by far not the main point of what Jesus is saying in these verses. His central thought actually comes in verse 3 where Jesus tells us I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am; Heaven means being with Jesus!

Pastor John Piper asks:

"The critical question for our generation—and for every generation— is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ were not there?"³

If you can answer "yes" to that question then the reality is that you won't be there because Heaven isn't about us living in a place where we receive all our earthly pleasures. No, Heaven is a place where those who have grown an appetite for Heavenly pleasures will find themselves utterly satisfied. And the primary Heavenly pleasure is a desire to worship God and bask in His glory.

And that is why Jesus says Heaven will be the place that He will come back and take us to be with Him that we also may be where He is. Heaven is about being with Jesus. And friends if the thought of spending eternity with Jesus doesn't sound appealing to you don't worry because God won't force anyone who doesn't want to worship Him to go to Heaven.

Though 2 Peter 3:9 tells us God doesn't wish for any to perish, He has made an alternative reality where people who do not live to worship Him can exist outside His presence forever. And that reality is called Hell.

Brothers and sisters, where is your heart today? Do you find yourself being transformed so that God's desires are becoming your desires? Are you hungry for God's glory to be increased in your life and through your life? If not then cry out for mercy.

[Pray]

And this brings us to the final part of our thesis: The antidote for a troubled heart is belief in **the One** who will return to take us to Heaven.

Look with me at verses 5 and following:

[Read John 14:5-7]

³ John Piper, "[God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself](#)" (Wheaton, I: Crossway, 2005), p. 15.

What would we do without Thomas! Known most infamously as Doubting Thomas because of his refusal to believe that Jesus had been resurrected until he actually put his hands in Jesus' side; Thomas turns up several times in the Gospels.

And most of the time he is expressing difficulty in believing or understanding what Jesus is talking about. And isn't this like us? We have the words of Jesus and yet so often we too fall into doubt.

Thomas' words in verse 5 are so honest. "How can we possibly know the way to go if we don't even know where you are going Jesus?"

And without these words we may never have received Jesus' most memorable self-declaration: I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jesus' words here are unapologetically exclusive and therefore incredibly offensive to the world we live in. Jesus says "I AM" – a claim we have come back to over and over throughout this series. Words that are by far the most offensive ever spoken. With these words Jesus made Himself equal with YHWH, the God who had revealed Himself as the God named I AM.

And the rest of Jesus' statement follows the power of these words as it answers Thomas' question: "How will we know the way to the Father?" Jesus says: I AM the Way there, and I AM the Truth that will lead you on the Way there, and I am the Life that will give you the power to follow the Truth along the Way there.⁴ Because Heaven is about being with Me.

And this is why Jesus follows this up by saying "No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus can make this intolerant claim because He is I AM, and this is His world and we are His children. And God will be recognized and worshipped as God in our lives or He will have nothing to do with us at all.

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In *The Silver Chair*, the fourth book in C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* a young girl, Jill, finds herself in a strange country on the top of a very tall mountain desperately thirsty.

Eventually she hears the delicious sounds of a babbling brook and heads towards it only to find a huge and terrifying Lion sprawled on the grass between her and the brook.

The Lion speaks to Jill and asks her if she is thirsty, and she responds she is dying of thirst. "Then come and drink," the Lion says. She is too afraid to venture near the Lion and asks if he would mind leaving while she drinks. But

⁴ Brunner, Dale. "The Gospel of John: A Commentary" (Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdman's Pub), 2012. pg 812.

she quickly realizes the presumption of this request: “She might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.” Meanwhile the delicious sounds of the running water are making her desperately thirsty.

Jill asks the Lion if he will promise not to do anything to her if she comes to the stream and drinks, but the Lion responds that he makes no promises. Driven nearly frantic with thirst, Jill comes a step nearer without noticing it. She then asks the Lion if he ever eats girls. The Lion responds matter-of-factly, “I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms.”

Jill is horrified by the thought of the unsafe venture her thirst is making her consider and she tells the Lion that she does not dare come near to drink. The Lion replies that then she will die of thirst. Jill slowly responds, “I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.” But the Lion replies, “There is no other stream.”⁵

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Friends, Jesus’ exclusive claim to be the only Way, the Truth and the Life; the only path to the Father and the very definition of Heaven itself, is one that flies in the face of the world of tolerance we live in. But it is the only antidote for the troubled heart of humanity.

And so the wager that we enter into by trusting His claim is one of infinite consequences. Jesus demands that we come and worship Him as God – that we repent, that we obey, that we take on child like faith, that we deny ourselves and take up our crosses, that we forsake the world we live in and love Him above everything and everyone else.

But He tells us that if we do this we will have lost nothing because He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the Way to the Father, in fact He is I AM. Of course there is no Way outside of Him because there is no Truth outside of Him and there is no Life outside of Him.

Brothers and sisters Jesus’ call for us today is the same as it was for His disciples 2000 years ago. You trust in God, Trust also in Me.

⁵ C.S. Lewis “The Silver Chair” as referred to in Dale Brunner’s “The Gospel of John”. Pg 813.