

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Comforting Savior In the preparation of Christ John 14:1-4

1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going.

Difficulties. Adversities. Hardships. Ordeals. Struggles. Anguish. Agony. Sufferings. Trials. Tribulations. Have you ever experienced one or more of such things? Of course you have. For one thing that is universally true, that is the common lot to all people who live on this sin-cursed world, is the continual exposure to various calamities, catastrophes, injuries and disasters. From the first time that we can remember stubbing our toes or being called a hurtful name by other children on through the experiences of life which bring all levels of hurt and heartache; sometimes, oftentimes the result of nothing we have done; but also at times self-inflicted as our own sinful tendencies lead us into destructive courses; we can be assured that life can be and will be hard at times.

This is certainly an evident truth just from experience, but it also a repeated theme of the Scriptures as humanity is constantly being reminded by God that one of the results of sin in this world is hardship and heartache. Consider the word of the Lord on this matter:

It was Job, a man whose suffering was most likely surpassed only by that of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, **“Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil” (Job 14:1)**. And Job’s so-called counselor, Eliphaz remarked in Job 5:7, **“For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward.”** The prophet Jeremiah, who endured great hardship and heartache made this commentary on his own life in Jeremiah 20:18, **“Why did I ever come forth from the womb to look on trouble and sorrow, so that my days have been spent in shame?”** And most all of us are familiar with the statement of Jesus who made this declaration in John 16:33 – **“...In the world you have tribulation...”**

The point is, we are promised trials in this life. It is never a matter of if; at best it is only a matter of degree...of how bad will it be; and at worse it is simply a matter of when. To be sure, as most of us examine our lives here this morning, we might all be able to say that the hand of suffering has been exceedingly soft against us in comparison to what we have seen happen to others. And yet the truth remains – we will live from trial to trial, trouble to trouble, tribulation to tribulation. And is it not true, that hardships generally trouble our hearts; that as we begin to see the world cave in on us, real or perceived, our hearts get heavy and anxious and we can tend to operate from an emotional frenzy rather than from a biblical framework.

Beloved...this world will trouble your heart. It doesn’t require a prophet of God to stand before you to promise that circumstances and events will arise that will initially cause your heart to ache, sometimes beyond what you may even think you are capable of standing. Someone will break your heart. Someone will use or abuse you in some fashion. Some natural catastrophe may find your possessions. Your own sins may bring your world crashing in on your head and

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the question is this...how can the believer contend with the sure to be heartaches of life? What is the remedy for a troubled heart – a heart that gets filled with the concerns of this life?

As we come to John chapter 14, we do see a shift of sorts in the theme. In John 13 we have seen the love of the Savior for His own; demonstrated in action and declared in word. In John 14 the theme is of the Savior's comfort. The disciples are being and will be further troubled; not only in the hours ahead as Jesus would be taken to the cross, but also in the days and years ahead as they would become ambassadors for Christ who will suffer with and for the cause of Christ.

And as you so often hear preacher say, let us not forget that even with this shift from the love of Christ for His own in chapter 13 to the comforting of His own in Chapter 14, that the numbered verses and chapter numbers are not inspired...they were not part of the original text. I have so often heard these opening verses of John 14 taught without a single reference being made to what just preceded such statements. Remember that Jesus had been intimating that His disciples would soon forsake Him and flee. He had told them that He was going away from them for a time and that they could not follow Him at current. He was going to go back to the Father by way of the cross and resurrection. The disciples, indeed no disciple of Jesus can do what Jesus did on the cross. Of course Peter didn't get this and so he asked why, "Lord, why can I not follow right now?" And Peter thought he would be able to help or even spare Jesus by laying down his own life for Jesus. Of course Jesus exposes the deceitfulness of the human heart to Peter and the disciples. Jesus tells Peter that he will deny Him three times before morning.

I cannot imagine the shock...the disbelief...the utter heartache that Peter and even the other disciples must have felt as that statement was processed in those moments...Peter did not deny this truth, for while he had previously sought to deny any such lapse of faithfulness, all he and the other disciples could do at this moment was to be silent and wonder if their love could be so conditional and wonder what would happen to all of them if bold Peter could so fail the Lord.

Beloved, it is with all this taking place...with such heartache and distress...with such a fear of the immediate future...with the realization that their world was about to radically change and at the moment the change seemed dreadfully bad that Jesus uttered those familiar and yet so deeply profound words – words that have sometimes been cheapened by being devoid of context as found in a greeting card or glibly said without consideration or communication of the setting in which they are found in scripture... ***"Do not let your heart be troubled..."***

And thus begins chapter 14 and a series of what we might call the comforting words of Christ as He prepares His disciples for both the immediate and the subsequent future – words in which anyone who genuinely follows Christ may also find great comfort. And in the words we find in our text this morning we find comforting words in what Jesus says He is preparing for those who are His own. And the first preparation of Christ for His own – the one consideration I offer you this morning to meditate on is this – that Jesus here prepares His disciples by teaching them how to cope with heart ache – because the heartache will come – and for the disciples it had begun and would actually increase before it was over. So, let me speak to you about how we can cope with heartache as it is revealed to us here in our text – three things we learn from the words of John 14:1 that teach us the cure to heartache.

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I. A providential word

Now then, let us begin by noting the providence of these words – that is the timeliness, the aptness of such words to His disciples. Jesus could have taught such a truth at any time if He has so desired. But Jesus knows that His own needed to hear such words right at this time. The truth of the matter is that no one generally receives the word **“Do not let your hearts be troubled”** when there is no affliction. In times of ease, the word that we need to hear from Christ is, “Do not let your heart be exalted.” But when the hard times come, the temptation of the heart is to allow our hearts to be tormented, to give up and even to drift away in a sea of despair; to allow the rain of the storm clouds to wash away our hope; to diminish our drive to live hard for Christ. Here is the apt word – the providential word, **“Do not let your heart be troubled”**. Beloved, this is a command; an imperative; something we must do. In the Greek, it is written so as to mean this – do not allow the circumstances you are about to go through shake your faith and your following of God; or as I like to say, circumstances cannot dictate obedience to God. “Do not let your heart...” your heart – that which drives, compels, motivates you to do what you do. “Do not let your heart be troubled...” The word troubled there literally means “stirred up; severely agitated.” It is the same word used to describe the waters at the pool of Bethesda where the ill man wanted to be immersed when the angel of the Lord would “stir up” or trouble the waters. It is the same word used in Matthew 2:3 of Herod who was troubled by the news of the Messiah’s birth. So anything that stirs your heart to the point of weakening your faith and resolve to follow Christ no matter what – do not let circumstances do that to you – that is the command.

But behind the command are also comforting words, both to the disciples and to our hearts. For as we noted, Peter was about to fail the Lord miserably. Jesus knew the extent of Peter’s failure. Jesus knew how untrustworthy Peter’s heart was. To be sure the spirit of Peter was willing but his own flesh was weak. Jesus knew the intensity of the discouragement the pending circumstances were to pour out upon the hearts of His own. Jesus knew the feelings of guilt and remorse that had started to fill and would soon overwhelm Peter when he would awaken to the reality of just how faithless his heart could be. And likewise, Jesus knows the faithlessness of our own hearts and loves us anyway and says to us, **“Do not let your heart be troubled.”** Have you been faced with your own faithlessness? Have you some heavy heartache you are dealing with that causes you to question the Lord even as Peter had? Jesus gives this providential word. It is providential and timely because it reminds us of a few other truths.

First, to allow your heart to be or remain troubled is of no benefit – it accomplishes nothing. No amount of worry ever brought rain to a drought-ridden land. For the person whose business is failing, doubt and unbelief never multiplied his customers. And beloved, the night may be dark, but the darkness of the troubled heart will never supply you with a light so that you might find your way out.

Second, to allow your heart to be or remain troubled is joy robbing. A heart that allows itself to be troubled by circumstances begins to focus on what it does not have, forgetting that you still have far more than you deserve and often yet far more than others. Have you ever heard of the Desert Rose? The Desert Rose is a most fascinating plant. It is native to the most arid areas of Africa including Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda and yet without much water and in a hostile environment, it is a hearty and beautiful plant. If the Desert Rose is without rain for a long time or endures extremely cold nights, it can lose most or even all of its leaves; yet they will

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re-grow after the next rain or after warm weather returns. Even if caterpillars defoliate the plant, its leaves will re-grow anew.

Beloved, believers are to be like that Desert Rose – lack of rain, a devastating caterpillar that eats away at your leaves must not rob you of your joy, for as you trust in Christ, and you will bloom again. Oh that we might have the grace to see the rose bloom even in our deserts.

Third, to allow your heart to be or remain troubled only makes that which may be bad actually worse. For the believer in Christ, there is no circumstance through which Christ has not promised to deliver us, so why then make the proverbial mountain out of the molehill. I am amazed at myself and others who can so magnify, so aggravate our trials so as to believe that no one has ever known the pain that we have felt. Not only have other saints of God endured far worse than most any of us, but our Lord Jesus Christ most assuredly has endure more. And it is He who says to you now, **“Do not let your heart be troubled...”**

Fourth, and finally for this consideration, a heart that is and remains troubled is most dishonoring to God. A heart that worries so over the future, that frets over the matters of this earthy existence is actually calling into question the very faithfulness of God in His life. Such a heart doubts the genuineness of the love of God. In the great ancient battles of history, so long as the king was seen and rallying the troops, an army would fight to the death. But if the king fled or was struck down, the army would flee. Beloved, what is it that you are going through that would every cause your King to flee? What can this world do that would ever strike down your King? No...our King assures us we can and will win, even if that win comes through death.

This is the providential word spoken to the disciples in their time of despair. Jesus would say to them later in John 16:33, “Fear not, take courage...I have overcome the world.

II. It is a practical word

Jesus tells His disciples, **“Do not let your heart be troubled...”** This is not just sentiment, like when we send a greeting card to one who is grieving. This is not some empty hope like saying, “We ought to get together sometime” without any real thought of how that might happen. Jesus expects this command to be obeyed. He expects of His disciples the practice of this statement. But to practice it requires great effort and great faith on the part of the disciple for there is nothing easy about turning a trouble heart toward joy. It is like what Spurgeon once quipped,

“Let not your heart be troubled.” “Oh,” says somebody, “that’s easy to say but hard to do.” Here’s a man who has fallen into a deep ditch, and you say to him, “Don’t be troubled about it.” “Ah,” says he, “that’s very pretty for you that are standing up there, but how am I to be at ease while up to my neck in mire?” But, if Jesus says it our heart need not be troubled.

But, if Jesus says it, our heart need not be troubled. This is a practical call to practice faith. Beloved, there are times when we feel like the man in the ditch...but Jesus says, no matter, do not be troubled. Remember Hebrews 11 contains many heroes who were kept from ultimately perishing how...only by faith, by an explicit, undiminished trust in God, His Word and His son. It

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has been said that there is nothing that faith cannot do, but what can we do if we do not have faith in God?

So I say to you that the command is a call to faith, to trust and this then is seen practically again by the next statement, which I also see as a command, where Jesus say, “**believe in God, believe also in Me.**” What does Jesus mean by this? He is reminding them as good Jews, who had believed, trusted, and followed God as revealed in the Old Testament, communicated to them through the prophets, a God whom they had not seen, yet were convinced of His presence and confidence of His providence in their live; that these must now also exercise the same faith now in Jesus. Ultimately the concern of the disciples was this, could they trust this One who was about to be crucified? And Jesus says in effect, “You have trusted God about other things that have concerned you, so now I say to you, exercise that same faith, that same trust, in Me and what I am doing and what I have been telling you.

The call is the same to you and to me today...will we trust God and trust Jesus Christ...will we forsake the troubling notions that maybe God is not concerned and not active in my life by remembering our past experiences of His providence in your lives. Have you trusted in Jesus for forgiveness of sin; that the thing that most alienate you from your Creator, that which would condemn your soul to a Christ-less eternity where there is nothing by weeping and gnashing of teeth. If so, what is there for which you would not trust Jesus now. Have you and will you entrust your heart; your family, your possession to the Lord Jesus. Will you pledge all that you have and all that you are to Him? Beloved, the cure to a troubled heart is an explicit trust in the person, provision and promises of God.

The problem is that we don't always want to exercise faith, because faith does not see with human eyes – and that is difficult for us. But a distant paraphrase of John 14:1 truly is, “Let Him lead thee blindfold onwards, love needs not to know; children whom the Father leadeth, ask not where they go.” They ask not because although they may not know the path, they know the goal. Jesus went to the cross because it was through the cross He must go to return to the Father in heaven. Now, in trust Jesus and His cross, we know our destination is in the presence of Jesus and the Father, even as next week's verses indicate.

The simple question is – will you so trust; will you so believe. Will you seek to practice more and more of what Jesus has commanded you; knowing that it may make the path rough, but that a rough path is worth it in light of our destination. Henry light, who wrote that hymn we love to sing, “Jesus, I Thy Cross Have Taken” also wrote these words:

*Then why should I tremble when trials are near!
But shortens thy journey, and hastens thee home.*

*It is not for me to be seeking my bliss,
Or building my hopes in a region like this;
I look for the city that hands have not piled,
I pant for a country by sin undefiled.*

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*Afflictions may press, they cannot destroy,
And the bitterest tears, if He smile but on them,
Like dew in the sunshine, grow diamond and gem.*

*Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose,
They only make heaven more sweet at the close:
Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall
An hour with my God will make up for them all.
Henry Lyte (1793-1847)*

An hour with God will make up for them all. Do you believe that? And that is not even the best truth. The best truth is that eternity is much, much longer than an hour. It is to sing:

*High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Son
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Sill be my Vision, O Ruler of All.*

III. It is a **precious** word

With all this said, let me have you consider just one more point to contemplate. Not only did Jesus give here in John 14:1 a providential word; not only a practical word, but finally then it is to be a precious word.

Do you consider these precious words of comfort? Why do you say so? The other day one of the small children in our church ran into the wall and was devastated. There was no real harm, no bumps and I suspected not even to be a bruise. I tried to console the child, but to no effect, the child continued to cry. Then the child's mother came and picked her up and said, "Its okay, your okay, stop crying." And guess what? The child stopped crying. Putting my own ego aside for moment, what was the difference between my words of consolation and the mothers? The mother's words were trusted and precious to the child. Beloved, if you know Jesus, then these words will be precious to you – you will long not only to hear them in your heart but also to practice them in your life.

But these words of Jesus are not only precious because they come from Jesus, but they also point us directly to Jesus. Notice how the verse ends with my paraphrase here...Do not let the sure to come trials of life trouble your heart so as to diminish your faith and following of God. You have seen and experienced the providence of God in the past and now I stand before You as God and say...trust also in Me. Come running to Me. Just as that child found comfort in the arms of her mother...Jesus says will you find coming to Me through My word so precious? Again, is this not what we sang earlier in the words:

*Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty; hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven; Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.*

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Beloved, that is John 14:1 – to know that the hand of God is leading us through; to know that Jesus is feeding us with His word and then simply to feed on it continually till you want no more – which is really saying, I will only find peace, joy and satisfaction in feasting on Jesus; on believing, trusting explicitly in all areas of my life the promises and practices of my Savior.

Beloved, Jesus has prepared for you this promise; a great promise, that there is nothing in this world that can separate you from His love; and that there is nothing in this world then that can every truly cause the believer to doubt His tender mercies and His providential hand. And so we can sing:

*Jesus guide me through the tempest; keep my spirit staid and sure
When the midnight meets the morning, let me love you even more!*

But all of this begins with the recognition that only by faith in Jesus can you find the remedy for those things that trouble your heart. So if you have things that are concerning you today...perhaps troubling your heart all week or for some time; know that it indicates you are not rightly trusting in Jesus and taking Him at His word. Begin afresh and anew today by obey the commands; **“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God; believe also in Me.”**

Soli Deo Gloria

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