

Comfort for Troubled Hearts

JOHN 14:1-6 • PART 1: BELIEVE IN JESUS

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It is good to be back with you this morning! We had a good trip to Ohio last week to spend some time with family over there, including several who came in from Hawaii. It is much easier to travel to Ohio than to Hawaii, and although Ohio does not have the scenery, it was still a very good trip, and I am very thankful to Hans for preaching last week.

As we get started, I'd like to share a letter that came in from one of the students in our Bible correspondence course program. This is from Helen. I'm not sure where she lives, but she says,

Amen. Thank you, Jesus, for these wonderful lessons. I enjoy them so much and I am eager to finish them. I love learning the lessons. I'm learning so much that I'm rejoicing in my soul. Thank you so very much for my beautiful certificate. I love it. Thank you for this lesson on James. I'm surprised at some of the things I learned in this lesson. Thank you so much. May God continue to bless your ministry.

At the bottom, she then asks us to also send lessons to her daughter, but it is good to hear feedback like that from time to time.

And then, we also had an update from the Eacret family. Amanda has been corresponding personally with several students. She says,

Hey everyone! I have made several pen-pals through our prison bible correspondence course. I have to come to know some amazing people who are looking for spiritual guidance. I ask that you keep all of these people in your prayers, but today I would like you to remember 2 specifically. The first is Cheyenne who is in a facility in Vandalia, Missouri. She has amazing faith and is participating in lots of great programs to better her life and prepare for her release this fall. She and I have had some deeper conversations regarding baptism, and I feel she may be ready to make this decision soon!!! Pray for God to open her heart to make this decision. The second is DeMorris who is at a facility in Bonne Terre [BON TEAR], MO. He has a Muslim background, but we have had the most amazing discussions and he is open to learning about the Bible. I was able to get a Bible sent to him, and he is so thankful for it!! DeMorris is in a rough facility that seems

to have poor management. It is a scary situation for him every day. He has been there for 25 years and is sentenced to life, so it is hard for him to remain positive. However, he continues to ask about and study the Bible, but still holds to his Muslim beliefs. Please pray for his safety and perseverance and for him to continue to be curious and interested in learning more about the Bible.

We are thankful that Cheyenne and DeMorris are continuing their studies, and we certainly pray that they will ultimately decide to obey the gospel.

We are starting our study of God's word this morning with a reminder, the most important of all reminders: God loves us, and he has provided a way for all of us to be saved. This is the good news, that Jesus the Son of God came to this world to live a perfect life and then give his life on the cross. He was buried, and then he came back from the dead on the third day. We respond to this good news by obeying it – we believe it, we make a decision to turn away from sin, and we call upon the Lord's name in the act of baptism – not as a way of earning our salvation by any means, but we trust and obey, causing us to be born into God's family.

Thankfully, there have been many examples over the past week or so, but the one I'm sharing comes from a college buddy, Paul Holland, who preaches for the Lord's church in Swartz Creek, Michigan. He's been there with his wife, Rachel, for a number of years now, and a week or so ago he says that "Jennifer Music was immersed into Christ for the forgiveness of sins tonight! She studied with Rachel for quite a while along with the women's class, taught by Barb Floyd, at church. To God be the glory." And I noticed that Jennifer was baptized by her husband. These are just screenshots from the video. My friends, Paul and Rachel, are the two on the left in the upper right-hand picture, and then Jennifer and her husband are pictured with Rachel in the picture on the lower right. But it is so good to see a husband and wife truly together, sharing the Christian faith. If you would like to obey the gospel as Jennifer has done, please pull me aside after worship today. And, if you have already obeyed the gospel in the past but have wandered from the Lord, and if you would like to be restored to God's family, if you would like to be considered a part of this congregation, please see me or one of the other shepherds of the church here, and we would love to get to know you, and study and pray together.

This morning, I'd like for us to start a series of lessons on what is perhaps one of the most encouraging passages anywhere in the New Testament. And I know, this is a rather bold claim, but I am referring to a statement made by Jesus to the apostles on the night before he dies. I would encourage you to be turning with me to John 14 (p. 1684). As we make our way to John 14, I would point out that in context, this is it – this is the night before the crucifixion. Starting in John 13, Jesus shares the Passover meal with his apostles, and knowing that Judas has already made plans to betray him to the Jewish authorities, Jesus decides to wash the disciples' feet. I know we sometimes discuss the question: If I knew this would be my last day on this earth, what would I do? Would we travel? Would we eat the best food? Would we take the day off to do something relaxing? Well, Jesus knew that this was it, and he chose to wash feet (including the feet of the man who would betray him). Judas leaves, and at this point (toward the end of John 13), Jesus makes a number of very disturbing statements, starting with a statement that was even disturbing to him. In John 13:21, we find that Jesus ***"became troubled in spirit"*** and testified and said, ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me."*** This group of only thirteen men had been infiltrated by a traitor. Then, in John 13:33, Jesus says, ***"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'"*** Now, I hope we remember: These men had left their careers, they had left everything, and now Jesus is leaving and going to a place where they cannot come? They had followed Jesus for 3-½ years, they had spent very little time with their families. The fishermen had left their nets and their boats, Matthew had left his tax

booth. Even if they wanted to go back, there really wasn't much to go back to. Thinking that Jesus is the Messiah, they left everything, and now he is leaving them? This is disturbing! This is not the way it was supposed to be! And then we come to the very end of John 13, where Peter offers to lay down his life for the Lord, but Jesus says to Peter, ***"Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times."*** This, also, is disturbing! This is almost panic-worthy, isn't it? 1.) One of the apostles will betray him, 2.) Jesus is leaving, and 3.) One of the Lord's closest friends is about to deny him – not once, not twice, but three times!

At this point, it is probably safe to say that these men are hurt, they are confused, they may be angry, they are certainly discouraged, they are disillusioned, they are disappointed, they are troubled, and I say this, because as we transition into Chapter 14, Jesus literally says, ***"Stop being troubled in your heart."*** The word we translate as ***"troubled"*** goes back to the idea of being "stirred up." Sometimes our hearts get stirred up, don't they? We think of a calm pool of water, and it might be perfectly clear, until somebody comes and stirs it up. That sediment comes to the top, and it's a mess, isn't it? I think of my daughter's fish this past Friday – this fish just traveled 650 miles in a plastic cup in a cupholder, even enduring a flat tire just south of St. Louis. I'm thinking that fish was a bit ***"troubled."*** Sometimes, our hearts are like that, and Jesus says, "Stop it." ***"Stop being troubled (or stirred up) in your heart."*** We will get to the text in just a moment, but as we consider what leads up to this passage, it's significant that when Jesus tells a group of people to stop being troubled, they are obviously troubled. So, this is the background; this is the context. Into this situation, Jesus speaks a series of some of the most comforting statements anywhere in scripture. This brings us to John 14:1-6,

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." ⁵ Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

In this passage, Jesus gives the remaining apostles a series of anchors, a series of statements intended to give them comfort in a very difficult time. And I'm hoping that over the next few weeks we will be able to apply these comments to our troubled hearts, because I think that many of us are troubled from time to time (for many reasons). We have issues. We do events that cause our hearts to be troubled – we may be overwhelmed by the guilt of past sin, we might be facing a seemingly insurmountable health challenge, we might be having relationship trouble, maybe we are not sure what to do in terms of education or a career (even to the point that this is pressing on us). The stress of buying a house. The stress of an upcoming move. I'm just saying: We need what Jesus is offering here.

But before we even get to the first statement, I also hope we notice who is making these comments. Jesus is comforting his disciples. But they are not the ones facing crucifixion the next morning! The Lord Jesus is about to bear the weight of every sin, he is about to be betrayed by a close friend and denied by another, he is about to die in one of the most excruciating ways possible (even the word "excruciating" literally means "out of the cross," reminding us that this is one of the most painful ways anybody could ever die), and yet Jesus is concerned about them! John wrote about this at the beginning of Chapter 13, when he said that ***"Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."*** Jesus loved these men, even to the point of thinking of them more than he thinks of himself. He comforts these men. But who is comforting Jesus? Nobody! They should have been

reassuring him, they should have been comforting him; but instead, he is the one encouraging them. So, this is the background to this little paragraph. Jesus, in need of some comfort himself, instead takes the time to comfort his disciples.

So, if your heart is stirred up over something, if your heart has ever been troubled in the past, if you think your heart might be tempted to start churning over something in the future, let's take a few weeks to listen to what the Lord says here. We need more Jesus, and this has Jesus written all over it.

And today I'd like for us to start where Jesus does (in verse 1), where he says, **"BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME."** I don't know whether you are taking notes and might need this, but this is "the point" in today's lesson! This is the first of several encouraging statements, and we will look at the others over the next several weeks (hopefully interrupted by a song service on the last Sunday in May). But this is the first of several reminders, and this one seems to come in the form of a command, **"Believe in God, believe also in Me."** Some of the older translations might say, **"You believe in God, believe also in me,"** as if Jesus makes an observation about their faith in God and then makes the progression to commanding faith in him (as if one should naturally lead to the other). And that might be part of it, but we need to realize that there's more to it than that. The statements are actually parallel, and both communicate the idea that they are to "keep on" believing in God, they are to "keep on" believing in Jesus; therefore, anyone who believes in God, to be consistent, must also believe in Jesus. Both of these go together. In other words, this is another one of those times when Jesus makes himself out to be equal with God. In fact, Jesus continues just a few verses later, in speaking with Philip, and says (in verse 9 of this chapter), **"He who has seen Me has seen the Father."** And in verse 10, **"I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me"** and **"the Father abiding in Me does His works."** Jesus and the Father are one. To believe in one is to believe in the other.

And finding comfort in this trust or belief in the Father is something that goes back to ancient times. We think of Isaiah 26:3-4 where Isaiah speaks to God and says, **"The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock."** Or, we might think of Isaiah's message in Isaiah 43:1-3,

***But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel,
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are Mine!
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.
For I am the LORD your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior...***

In troubled times, Jesus tells his disciples to trust in God and also to trust in him. These men had been with him for 3-½ years. They had heard every word, they had seen ever miracle, they had seen at least three people raised from the dead, they had seen thousands fed with just a tiny bit of food, they had seen him cast out demons, they had seen him teach with authority. They knew that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. So, although their hearts were troubled at what Jesus had just said about being betrayed, and dying, and leaving, they could take comfort in their belief. They could trust him just as they had trusted God.

And yes, this was first spoken to the apostles, but let's remember that these words were written down by John not for their benefit, but for ours. The whole point of the book of John is to encourage belief in Jesus, to encourage the kind of belief Jesus tells us to have right here. Over in John 20:30-31, John says, ***"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."*** This reminds us that ***"...faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"*** (Romans 10:17). All of us here this morning have "heard" the word of God. So, when Jesus tells his disciples to "believe," they had seen the evidence firsthand. Now, we read what they wrote. Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ.

Conclusion:

So, in terms of what this passage means for us, it means that when our hearts are troubled, we turn to Jesus. That the point: Believe in Jesus. We read the words that he spoke, we read the eyewitness accounts of the miracles, we study how Jesus treated people, and putting our trust in him has a way of calming our troubled hearts.

So, if our hearts are stirred up, if our hearts are uneasy, if our hearts are like that fish bouncing down the interstate in a plastic cup, we turn to Jesus. Jesus is something of a landmark, a lighthouse, an anchor, a cornerstone. In John 13-14, the apostles were starting to look at their own troubles, but as an answer to those troubled hearts, Jesus says, ***"Believe in God, believe also in Me."*** The author of Hebrews encourages us to ***"...run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."*** When we are in danger of growing weary and losing heart, we look to Jesus, and this is the Lord's first reminder here in John 14. When we are troubled, we turn to Jesus. As Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:8, ***"...though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."***

I'm looking forward to coming back to this passage next week as we continue looking at Jesus' advice for bringing comfort to troubled hearts. For the rest of our time together today, we will be singing songs about Jesus.

Before we continue with singing and the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer,

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the great and awesome God, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. You comfort our troubled hearts, allowing us to comfort others. Thank you, Father, for sending Jesus to show us what it means to truly care for others. On the night before he died, even knowing what was about to happen, your Son took the time to comfort his disciples. We live in a world where we are surrounded by suffering and death and pain and stress. We pray that we would also be able to see what others are going through and that we would take time to comfort and encourage.

Be with John and Denesha as they travel. Be with Denesha's parents and her brother. Be with Helen, and Cheyenne, and DeMorris, as they learn more about you. Be with Jennifer in Michigan as she starts her new life in you. Bless us as we reach out to the world around us.

We come to you in the name of your son Jesus. Thank you, Father, for hearing our prayer. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com