

Sunday, January 31, 2021

This will be the fifth in a series of sermons on John 13-17, commonly known as “The Farewell Discourse.” The outline that I’m following is:

1. [Jesus Loves His own \(13:1\)](#) [7/5/2020]
2. [Foot Washing \(13:2-17\)](#) [8/30/2020]
3. [Identifying the Traitor \(13:18-30\)](#) [10/18/2020]
4. [Christ’s Glory and How We Are To Live In His Temporary Absence \(13:31-38\)](#) [12/6/2020]
5. **Preparing a Place (14:1-4)**
6. The Only Way to the Father (14:5-7)
7. Seeing God (14:8-14)
8. Peace and Comfort (14:15-27)
9. Loving God (14:28-31)
10. Abiding in Christ, the True Vine (15:1-11)
11. Friends of Christ (15:12-17)
12. The Hatred of the world (15:18- 16:4a)
13. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15)
14. Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned Into Joy (16:16-24)
15. Prayer in His Name (16:25-32)
16. He’s Spoken That You Might Have Peace (16:33)
The High Priestly Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)
17. Jesus Prays For Himself (17:1-5)
18. Jesus Prays For His Present People (17:6-19)
19. Jesus Prays For His Future People (17:20-26)

We are now entering chapter 14, and the apostles of Jesus Christ have troubled hearts. We are troubled about things from time to time, so we might be able to understand what these men were going through. The events that had just taken place would have been cataclysmic to those tender souls. Even as they were striving with one another about who should be the greatest, Jesus had humbled them by washing their feet and telling them to love one another as He had loved them – they were doubtless ashamed of themselves; they had just learned that one of the apostles would betray the Lord Jesus, and another one of them would deny Him three times; and He had just told them that He would be leaving them, and they couldn’t go with Him at that time. Plenty of things to be troubled about. But of all these things, it seems that the thing that troubles them the most is Jesus leaving them. And Jesus, knowing their hearts and observing their fallen countenances, knows exactly what to say:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”
(John 14:1-4)

Just to take a quick step back so we don’t lose the forest for the trees, in looking over John 14, if I was going to summarize the main idea in one word, that word would be “comfort.” Jesus will be crucified in a matter of hours, and it’s striking to me that His primary concern here is how to comfort His loved ones. Amazing love and self-denial. In this chapter, He provides a clear path for the child of God to be eased of a troubled heart, and the two landmarks for us are His commands to **trust** (v.1) and **obey** (v. 15).

We'll start talking about the "trust" part today, namely, that we should trust Him because He's trustworthy, and He's made us great promises. Ironclad, guaranteed promises. Promises about heaven: that it's there, that He went there to prepare it for us, and that He's coming back to get us so we can be there with Him. To know that we can take Him at His word and believe what He's saying is a source of great comfort and a sure way to ease a troubled heart.

So, moving into today's text, I'd like to break this down into 3 parts: "The Antidote to a Troubled Heart," "The Promise of a Prepared Place," and "The Promise of a Reception."

The Antidote to a Troubled Heart

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1)

This follows right on the heels of His prophecy of Peter's denial. If we ignore the chapter division, it goes like this: "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled." You might be tempted to think that He's just continuing His conversation with Peter here, but He's not – He's moved from Peter to addressing the whole group. How do I know? Because it moves from the singular to the plural. How do I know? There's a trick you can use with the King James Version English to tell:

King James English		
	Singular	Plural
Subjective	thou	ye
Possessive	thy, thine	your, yours
Objective	thee	you

Today's English		
	Singular	Plural
Subjective	you	you
Possessive	your, yours	your, yours
Objective	you	you

So, He's addressing the whole group, and He knows that they're troubled. They're troubled deep down to their core – into their very heart, that innermost seat of thought, emotion, affection, etc. "Troubled" means "to agitate, cause inward commotion, take away calmness of mind, disquiet, make restless, stir up, render anxious or distressed." These guys are all distressed, and Jesus issues them a command to stop it. "Let not your heart be troubled." See here that the word "heart" is singular, either because they were all sharing in the distress, as it were, with one heart, or to stress that He's addressing each individual in the group.

Now, we have a minor conundrum here, because just a few minutes earlier, Jesus Himself was troubled about the betrayal of Judas: "He was troubled in spirit" (13:21). How can He tell these guys not to be troubled when He was just troubled Himself? The answer is that having a troubled heart isn't in and of itself a sin...it's only when it's taken too far that it becomes a sin. When you start to distrust God, when it impacts your ability to serve Him, when it stands in

the way of you being able to minister to one another, when it results in you being discontented, etc., you've taken it too far. It's now a sinful passion. It's similar to anger. Jesus got angry ("he had looked round about on them with anger" – Mark 3:5), so we know anger in and of itself is not a sin. And we have this instruction in Ephesians:

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26-27)

It's been said that when Jesus was troubled it was like a crystal-clear pond being agitated for a moment and then returning to its perfect stillness. But when we are troubled, it's like a dirty, murky, stagnant pond that's been roiled up, and the muck from the bottom continues to move around for excessive amounts of time until it finally resettles. I like that image. The fact is, we have to go through troubling times – without trouble, comfort has no meaning. Just don't let it go too far, such that it becomes embedded in your hearts, allowing those siblings named “discontentment” and “distrust” to rule over you. Richard Sibbes said: “Satan loves to fish in these troubled waters.” Wherever you find excess, Satan is there to take advantage of it.

I mentioned earlier that of all the things they have to be troubled about here, it's the Lord Jesus leaving them that troubles them the most. They probably are thinking here that they've given everything up for this man, and now He's abandoning them. Beloved, I believe that the cause of the greatest distress in a child of God is if we come to think that the Lord God has forsaken us; that He's turned His face from us. Nothing is darker than being in that place. And it's very easy to end up in that place. Just look around – there is no shortage of things that you could be troubled about! There's a plague infesting this world, riots, global warming (God pre-heating the oven), violence, political upheavals, heresy, proud sin and rebellion, liars, traitors, accusers of the brethren, wolves in sheep's clothing, money-grubbers, simpletons. And then you survey your own life, your circumstances, your health, your sins, your ministry, your flesh, your zeal, etc., and you may conclude that God has hung you out to dry. And I'm here to tell you that you're wrong – He hasn't forsaken you. He promised, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus Christ was forsaken by the Father in your place (I'm talking to God's people here, not everyone). That doesn't mean, though, that you will never sink down into the Slough of Despond and abide in the doldrums for awhile. But when you're there, I hope you remember this commandment: “Let not your heart be troubled.”

And He doesn't just tell us to not let our heart be troubled...He tells us how. And the number one cure to this disease is this: “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” You want to be cured of your troubled heart? Believe in Jesus Christ; trust Jesus Christ; believe what He says; trust His promises; believe on Him with ever-increasing faith. Remember, these disciples here already had saving faith in Christ – when He says “believe in me” in this place, He's not

speaking to unbelievers, telling them that they need to start believing in Him. (Not that the text couldn't be used to help an unbeliever understand what he needs to do – the Lord Jesus can cure a troubled heart in any sinner). In the context, I think His message here to believers is, “trust me. When your faith falters and you think I’ve abandoned you, trust me. Stay your minds on me, and you’ll have peace.”

His words here could be translated as commands, statements of fact, or a combination of both. I like the King James translation – “Ye believe in God” (statement of fact), “believe also in me” (command). In other words, “you already believe in God; you need to believe in me in the same way, because I am God – you can trust anything I say to you, because I cannot lie – I’m your Mediator, and the only way for you to be saved, and I’m not going to lead you astray.” So, what is it that He wants us to believe? What does He want us to trust in Him about? And why should we believe in Him? That brings us to our next point.

The Promise of a Prepared Place

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2)

You may be troubled of heart, you may be uncertain about the details of what’s going on, but this one thing is certain – there’s a place in heaven for you. His Father’s house is there, and there are many mansions in it. This word translated “mansion” here appears only two times in the Bible, both in John 14 – verse 2, and verse 23 (where it is translated “abode”). The idea here is that God has an abiding place for us – a place where we aren’t going to be transient strangers, but rather, welcome members of the family. And there’s ample room for us – even for those of us with the feeblest faith, there is room, and we won’t be denied an entrance. I can’t help but think of the chambers that were built around the temple of God (see 1 Kings 6:5) when I think of these “mansions” or “abodes.” And I also can’t help but think of the inheritances that were portioned out in the book of Joshua. These “mansions” seem to be distinct dwellings, made to suit each of us individually, and the number of them will perfectly accommodate the number of God’s elect, which has been fixed from eternity past.

He says here, “if it were not so, I would have told you.” This might be one of the most precious promises in all of scripture. Our Lord is not going to let his disciples go along believing in a fairy tale – some cockeyed dream and unrealistic hope that will never come to fruition. We can trust Him – He’s not going to lie to us. It could also be rendered as a rhetorical question, something like, “If it were not so, don’t you think I would have told you? Do you really think I’d allow you to be led astray, encouraging you to believe in a fantasy world that doesn’t exist?” Beloved, we have an absolutely trustworthy Savior in Jesus Christ. He will

not lie, He cannot lie (because God cannot lie), and He will not allow us to go down a path of falsehood without snatching us back.

So, we have a guarantee that in His Father's house are many mansions. And we have a guarantee that He went to prepare a place for us. For the children of God, mind you – not for everyone. These promises are only for the elect of God. He's not going to prepare a place in vain and then leave it up to our fickle "free wills" to determine if the place that He's prepared will be occupied. No, no – this is a fixed and certain thing. "No *man* is able to pluck *them* [i.e., His sheep] out of my Father's hand." (John 10:29). He's even going to come back and get us to make sure we make it there.

Charles Spurgeon has a word here: *"A father said to his children, when the summer sun had become hot, 'I shall go to the seaside today, to prepare a place for you.' His little child asked, 'What does father mean when he says that he will prepare a place for us?' And his mother answered, 'My child, I cannot tell you all that your father means, but you will see when you get there; and now, it must be enough for you that, although you do not know what father will have to do at the seaside in preparing a place for you, he knows what he is going to do.' And, dear friends, there is this consolation for us that, even if we can hardly guess what it is that Christ can find to do to prepare heaven for us, he knows what is needed, and he knows how to do it; and that is infinitely better than our knowing, because, even if we knew what was needed, we could not do it."*

So, I confess that I don't know exactly what He means when He tells these brothers that "I go to prepare a place for you," but I'll pass along a few thoughts. First, in Matthew 25, Jesus tells us that there is already a place prepared for us: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (v. 34). This is similar to Jesus being called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8). The decrees of God are so unchanging and sure that even though Jesus wasn't actually slain until He was made flesh and died for us, He is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world. Likewise, even though Jesus didn't actually go to prepare it until this time, it can still be said that it was prepared from the foundation of the world. But there's more to this.

I believe that Jesus went to heaven to pave the way for us, so to speak, removing all obstacles that would have prohibited us from entering heaven. His death, burial, resurrection, ascension – all were necessary for heaven to be prepared for us to enter. In His resurrection, He became "the firstfruits of them that slept." (1 Corinthians 15:20). By His ascension, He became our "forerunner" (Hebrews 6:20). Look at this wonderful symbol from the book of Numbers:

“And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.” (Numbers 10:33)

Nothing can keep us out of heaven because we are there on His merit, and His merit alone – all obstacles have been removed. He has obtained a right for us to be there. Further, He plays the role of our High Priest and is ever living to intercede for us, pleading His merit, thereby securing our place forever in heaven, ensuring that we are saved to the uttermost (see Hebrews 7:25). As our High Priest, He mystically bears our names on His breast as He dwells in heaven, just as Aaron did: “Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy *place*, for a memorial before the LORD continually.” (Exodus 28:29). His very presence in heaven has made it a fit place for us – a prepared place – a place where we are known and expected.

Matthew Henry compares what Jesus did to the legal concept of “*livery of seisin*” (meaning “transfer of possession”). One dictionary defines it as, “*A delivery of possession of lands, tenements, and hereditaments, unto one entitled to the same.*” Another says, “*an ancient ceremony for conveyance of land by the symbolic transfer of a relevant item (as a key, twig, or turf) or by symbolic entry of the grantee.*” Upon His ascension, Jesus entered heaven as our representative, thereby taking possession of and securing it on our behalf.

And one final passage that may shed a little bit of light on what this preparation means:

“He sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” (Heb. 9:21-23)

This is an amazing passage that could be the subject of many sermons. But the point here is that it was necessary, by the decree of God, that these “heavenly things” be purified with “better sacrifices” (i.e., the sacrifice of Christ – using a figure of speech called an “enallage” where the plural has been put for the singular – in this case, because the one sacrifice of Christ has replaced the many symbolic sacrifices in the OT). On this passage, Gill says, “*by the blood of Christ an entrance and preparation is made for the saints into it [that is, heaven].*”

So, that is the reality of things today, friends. As we go about our daily lives, it might be easy to forget that there are many mansions in our Father’s house and there is a prepared place awaiting our arrival...but it gets much better. He will return to personally retrieve us and take us there. Remember that this is all intended to comfort us and ease a troubled heart.

“The Promise of a Reception”

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”

(John 14:3-4)

On [September 8, 2019](#), Tim opened his sermon like this: *“If you, for purposes of eschatology, have a single verse of Scripture ringing in your ears as you make your daily path in this life, this should be the verse.”* And I agree with that. The Lord Jesus is setting down a framework here: He came, He left and He’s coming back to receive us unto Himself. There is a lot of stuff about eschatology that is hard to understand, and though it’s worth every effort to understand what God has given you light to understand, you might get lost in all the nuances about the rapture, temple, chronology, Jews, tribulation, millennium, seals, trumpets, vials, etc., but don’t despair, and don’t lose sight of the big picture! He will come again, and He will receive us unto Himself. This reminds me of a quote I once saw: *“The gospel is so simple that small children can understand it, and it is so profound that studies by the wisest theologians will never exhaust its riches.”* Any child can understand these simple words of Christ.

This passage is primarily talking about the second coming of Christ. This is about when we get our new bodies. Secondly, we can get some comfort that a soul who dies will immediately be with Christ (see Philippians 1:23) – but the main import of this passage is about the second advent of Christ. The promise is that He WILL come again, and He WILL receive us. The Father has given us to the Son (John 17:2), and He will return to claim us as His eternal Bride. This whole passage crescendos up to the point where He says: *“that where I am, there ye may be also.”* This is a “purpose” clause – it tells us what the purpose of all of this is – why did He come to earth? Why did He die? Why did He go back to heaven? Why is He going to return? And the purpose is so we can be with Him. This is why the church is called *“the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”* (Ephesians 1:23).

We don’t know a lot about what heaven is like, but we know that Christ will be there, we know that we will be like Him, we know that we shall see Him as He is, and we know that we will be with Him (see 1 John 3:2). The end goal here is everlasting communion with Christ. If that’s not how you envision heaven, it’s time for you to refocus! You can see why that majestic language in 1 Thessalonians 4 about the return of Christ builds up to and concludes with us being with the Lord:

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto

you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

He goes on to tell His disciples that they know where He’s going, and they know how to get there. And they know that because He just told them where He’s going, and He’s told them before on multiple occasions how to get there. For example: “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35); “I am the door” (John 10:9); “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). This is why He is telling them that they know. The problem is that they don’t seem to know that they know (see Thomas’s follow-up question, which we’ll go over next time, Lord willing). Perhaps they hadn’t put all the pieces together. Perhaps they couldn’t bring themselves to admit that He was going to have to die and leave them. I think we’ve all been in situations where we knew something to be true, but just couldn’t bring ourselves to admit it. I think His message to them is something like, “deep down you guys know what’s going on here; otherwise, you would have turned out like Judas. You might not have thought this completely through, but you know the way to heaven, because you know me.” And that message is just as important for us today as it was for them nearly 2000 years ago.

Now, I’d like to conclude with a couple dangers. The first danger is that you’ll become so excited about the Lord coming that you start doing foolish things and forsaking your duties while you’re here on earth (“We’ll Work ‘Til Jesus Comes”), possibly becoming impatient and disgruntled because He’s not returning on your timeline. The second danger is the opposite extreme, and that is that you’ll forget all of this. We live in relative opulence and safety. We sit back and rest in our luxury, or we get caught up in the day-to-day grind. Either way, we lose sight of the big picture. I recently found a great quote: “*We have fomented a neurotic generation of malcontents.*” So, if you’re one of those neurotic malcontents – if your life is a perpetual state of discontentment due to your troubled heart - I would say it’s time for you to get your priorities straight and patiently keep your eye on the goal. The way to an untroubled heart is believing in the Lord Jesus. Trusting His promises. He hasn’t abandoned us, He’s promised us a prepared place in heaven, and He’s promised that He will return to receive us unto Himself, so we can be with Him forever! Don’t forget how this will all end up for those who have faith in the Lord Jesus. And if you don’t have faith in the Lord Jesus, you should rectify that situation without any further delay – otherwise, there is another place that is prepared for you (Matthew 25:41). It is fitting to close this particular sermon in the same way the Bible closes: “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.” (Rev. 22:20-21).