

What do you do when...? Your heart is troubled. John 14:1-12, +13-14

It's been a string of weeks with such sudden change and upheaval. Of course, the changes may have brought some enjoyable moments: less running around and more time in your home with your family. But the very same changes have meant others of you have been separated from some of your family – from being with your grandchildren for instance.

Life has been stirred up so much these past weeks. It's maybe even hard to remember back to the initial days Covid-19 became the outbreak that it is here in the US. Try to think back, maybe to early or mid-March. What shook you up the most then? Can you even recall? Cases of Covid-19 hadn't arrived yet in many areas. And since our minds often drift to what is hitting closest to home for us, the issues of having enough testing kits or the impact of strain on our local health care system maybe hadn't hit yet for us. So was it... back then... toilet paper that was the greatest cause of consternation for any of us?

It was at just that timeframe that Pastor Nass, from one of our sister churches up in WI, stopped at a convenience store desperate for some toilet paper. It was in a rough part of his town. He shared his amazement over finding a whole aisle full of it. He asked at the counter, "How do you have all this when nowhere else does?" The reply was: "People *here* aren't worried about the coronavirus." Turmoil about where they'd find their next meal, or about being evicted, or about violence on the streets or drugs around the corner, yes. But not troubled about whether there's enough toilet paper.

It makes one pause, and kinda think through: Are the things that stir us up, and trouble us, big or little? Maybe some of them are little. Or littler.

Now most likely many of you, if not all, in the midst of this pandemic have faced *bigger* issues. What we've been able to do, and how we do things, have changed. Some of you have been laid off, or had hours cut. Some of you have had family members suffer through having Covid-19 – at least one case severe, enough to be hospitalized. Lives have been stirred up. And Covid-19 is not the first thing to come along in our world, or in your lives, to cause such uncertainty, pain or hardship.

Whether big or little, either way, is there an answer for when your heart gets troubled?

Jesus said to His disciples on the night before His death - and His encouragement stands as true today for us: "*Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God. Also (or namely), Trust in me.*"

Jesus is not dismissing the weight and pain that comes with hardships that we face. We'd be foolish to trivialize life's troubles, as if they are nothing. There's a saying that someone came up with, and I want you to evaluate it for a moment: "There are only two rules: 1) Don't worry about the small stuff; 2) It's all small stuff." I know it's meant to be an encouragement. I know it is probably to be taken as an overstatement, and not literally. But let's state anyway: it's not all small. The things that you deal with in life aren't all small.

They are "smaller." That's true. That's not dismissing the pain or weight of the hardship or loss you're experiencing or have experienced in life. It's just recognizing: everything here and now is *smaller* in comparison to the eternal things that Jesus has won for us. Paul told the Roman Christians: "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory" that we, who are in Jesus, have to look forward to. The home in heaven that Jesus has prepared for His people, with what life there will be like, is far greater and longer lasting than anything from life here and now.

That doesn't mean we ignore the ordeals of the days here and now - some stretching from a new blip on the timeline of our lives, into weeks, on to months sometimes, even lasting for years or lifelong. Don't act as if they are trivial and small, when they aren't. Not some. Some are heavy, and hard.

For that very reason, keep in view *the love* of our Lord Jesus, and *presence* of Him who is your Savior and Shepherd, and *the future you have* with Him as His dear child through faith in His life, death and resurrection to save you.

His love – His presence – the future you have with Him.

Jesus took His disciples to those very truths when they came to the stuff of life that caused uncertainty or pain. Jesus takes us to the very same truths, right here.

The issue we are addressing today is: What do you do when your heart is troubled?

Jesus sees the troubled hearts of His disciples. Jesus gives the answer for calming stirred up hearts. He gives it right away in the very next thing He says after acknowledging their state of turmoil inside. Do you remember it? You can look back if you have it on a sheet, or pulled up on your screen, or open in your Bible: "*Trust in God. Trust in me.*"

And then He goes on to answer: trust in Him for what? Is it for immediate relief from problems? Does He deliver some kind of promise that that is what He gives to His dearly loved children? No.

Listen Vs.2-4 – ² *In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you.* ³ *And ... I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am.* ⁴ *You know where I am going, and you know the way.*

His plan for you is bigger than the here and now.

He has bigger, better blessings to get ready for you. And to get you to them is His greatest work. That's what He told His disciples about next. His greatest work. And His greatest blessing to give to us.

Listen Vs.6 - *Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.* We heard earlier (in our service) 1 Peter 2: "The one who believes in Him – Jesus – will certainly never be put to shame!" Jesus said, another time prior to this: "Everyone who believes in Him shall have eternal life, and He will raise him up at the Last Day" (John 6).

And while getting you to that end goal - of eternal life with Him - is His greatest desire for you, He hasn't left you to face here and now alone.

Starting at the end of Vs.12, Jesus says: *"I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it."*

What does that tell you? Yes, He is not physically seen by you or me. But He is not distant. And you are not forgotten.

How do you know? He is hearing everything you ask of Him. That means He is right here – our unseen, but ever present God. And He is doing everything that is absolutely best for you in reply to your prayers. That doesn't always translate into giving you the thing you ask for; for sometimes He knows that something else is the best way to answer.

Prayers offered "In Jesus' name" are based on just that: trust in Him to know what is best, and to do what is best. This means we are yielding to His wisdom. That's an expression of trust.

We're wrapped back around to trust, the very thing Jesus took us to at the outset of this teaching time brought to us in John ch.14. And there's good in some reflection – on the part of each one of us – on: How have I failed to show such trust? [pause] I know my failures. You can identify yours. We confessed such sins earlier in our service.

There's joy and renewed strength from hearing: Jesus has wrapped you in His perfect life of trust. It is yours through faith. There's nothing you lack. There's no punishment left for you to suffer for sin. For Jesus took it all for you.

Hearing that, having that, brings added fruits of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit):

- like the peace of knowing "the Lord loves me" even when I feel pain,
- like confidence that confesses "Jesus is still with me and caring for me" even when change makes me feel uneasy,
- like comfort with which to comfort others also, because we ourselves have received it from God.

So what turmoil have people around you faced lately? Loss. Whether it is stuff in life, or life itself. Things can be gone in an instant. Life here and now can be gone in an instant. The life of a loved one can be gone. And suddenly you can be standing over a grave. But Jesus' words today assure that for all who trust in Him as the Way to God and life with Him, death is not your final destination. And eternal death is not something you, who trust in Jesus, will ever face.

Maybe the present circumstances in our world, in your life, where God will give you a chance not only to be reminded yourself, but to even also share with someone else, the certain hope and peace that comes from Jesus.

Looking out the twelfth story window at St. Lukes Hospital Milwaukee, it was a pretty bleak view, with a white haze obscuring everything, the city drab and dreary. Talking to the nurse, my cousin said: "The good thing is, the sun is still up there. You can't see it because it's obscured by all the clouds and gloom, but it's still there. And you know it's there because you can still see its daylight through all of the gloom. The sun isn't going anywhere. We're going to see it again. ...life is like that a lot, too. Sometimes the sunshine of God's love for us is hidden by the setbacks, the troubles and all the other hardships in our lives and it's difficult to see. But his love and goodness never go away. They are always still there, above and behind it all and you can see the evidence of it in the cross of Jesus Christ and in the goodness he pours into our lives every day: daily bread, unexpected blessings, family and friends. Sometimes it seems hidden, but God's love and goodness is always there."

Jesus' words today give you and me the view past the clouds: His *love for you* and His *presence and care* for you are true even when "hidden" by difficulty. And the greatest blessing that He gives to us as His dear children through faith is ahead. As He tells you:

"Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many mansions. ... I am going to prepare a place for you. ³ ...I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am. ⁴ You know where I am going, and you know the way. ... I am the way" – says your Jesus. Amen.