

Who wants some good news this morning? Here it is. *Don't worry. It's going to be ok.* I'm serious. *Don't worry. It's going to be ok.* You ever have anyone say that to you before? How did you feel about it?

It's a phrase, I'm sure, many of us use on a regular basis, and probably use it in a number of ways. We may use it with a child who is scared or worried. We may use it with a friend or loved one who is going through a tough time. Sometimes it's used as an empty platitude that can sound dismissive of others' concerns. Or, on the rare occasion I make a bigger deal out of something than I really should, it's a phrase of irritation, used by Martha, with a slight twist. "Don't worry about it. It's fine." It's also one of the truest, most biblical promises for a follower of Jesus to hold on to in times of affliction and, it's the promise of the passage we're going to look at today.

We're continuing in our series called *Changes*. Jesus is spending his last night in an upper room with his closest followers and giving them some final instructions. He knows he's about to go away and is leaving them with some universal truths to hold on to in times of change and the uncertainty that comes with it.

The disciples were in a bad way. Think of all the things they were having to deal with. They heard Jesus say several times during his ministry that he was going to suffer and die. He told them multiple times he was going away, that one of them was a traitor (followed immediately by one of them leaving the room under confusing circumstances), that Satan was at work against all of them and they would all fall away, and at the end of chapter 13, he says Peter would disown Him three times.

In spite of all of that, Jesus has the audacity to look at them and immediately say, "**Let not your hearts be troubled.**" In other words, *don't worry*. He doesn't say it flippantly. He's not being dismissive of their legitimate concerns. He, in fact, understands the magnitude of what they are dealing with, and his message to them is to control their hearts, that they would change their thinking and behavior because of a promise he's about to make them, and the promise is that *it's going to be ok*.

I'm sure when I listed the afflictions of the disciples, many of you started making lists of your own. Many of you have trouble with your finances, with your health, or the relationships in your life. You are troubled over sales results and election results, and anxiety and fear rule many of your days. Jesus knows we are all susceptible to heart trouble, and his command to us is to control what our heart focuses on (don't worry), not because it's unimportant, but because of what he promises us to look forward to (it's going to be ok).

But those are empty words if we don't believe the person saying them, aren't moved by what's being promised, or aren't sure how it's going to be fulfilled. It's much easier to do the first part, *don't worry*, if we are compelled by the second part, *it's going to be ok*. **Jesus gives us his promise not only to tell us what life will be like in the future, but to impact the way we live life now.** We have to decide if we are going to let it.

The impact of a promise is in its security. In other words, how likely is it that this promise will be fulfilled? A promise is only as good as the character of the one who made it. **[John 14:1-2]**

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?”

Jesus begins with what may sound like an encouragement to a passive avoidance of trouble, but really is a loving admonition to intentional action. Our hearts are the command center of our personality, and we are responsible for, and have control over, its condition. What you consume and what you focus on are what feeds your heart.

I have my annual physical next week and I’m pretty sure my doctor is going to tell me I’ve been consuming too many chicken fingers...I’m just doing my part to keep our shopping center neighbor in business...and that it is negatively impacting the health of my heart.

What are you consuming to feed heart? I’m convinced 80% of social media posts send one of two messages: 1) “Their life is better than mine”, which sows seeds of discontent and diminishes gratitude. 2) “The world is falling apart”, which sows seeds of fear, mistrust, and division. When we consume either of those messages, we expose our hearts to trouble.

When we focus on our temporary circumstances, we lose sight of our eternal hope. You might call it spiritual rubbernecking. Think about when there’s a wreck on the other side of the highway. It’s not in our way. It’s not prohibiting us from moving forward to our destination. But what happens? You drive by it and everyone slows down and focuses on it and traffic jams up. Some of us are so focused and jammed up on the calamity around us that we forget where we’re headed. Jesus wants us to keep our eyes on the road and on our ultimate destination.

But if we are to hold fast to the promises Jesus makes, we have to believe him when he says it. If Jesus is not trustworthy, then it’s time to freak out! If Jesus isn’t who he says he is, or can’t be counted on to do what he says he’s going to do, then let your heart be troubled.

Jesus says, “Believe in God; believe also in me.” Understand, his followers are devout Jews. They know their Scriptures and they know the God of the Old Testament. Jesus is reminding them that the God they grew up learning about, the God who is faithful and loves Israel, is the same God standing before them right now. The God who gave them his Word through Moses and the Prophets, who told of his person, his plan, and his actions, is the same God who has been with them these many years, teaching with authority and doing so many wonderful deeds that, as John says, there wouldn’t be enough room on earth if they were all written down. They know the character of Jesus because of his words and works.

We too have the Word of God and his work in our lives as testimony to his faithfulness and the trustworthiness, and he’s given us his Spirit to teach and remind us of these things. This is something Paul is convinced of. In his letter to Titus, Paul writes **[Titus 1:2] ²In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.** God’s Word is a true testimony about himself and a book of promises, and his perfect character doesn’t allow him to tell a lie.

What impact does the Word of God have in your life? If it's just a book of interesting stories and strict rules, then put it back on the shelf and let it collect dust. But if it's the revelation of a holy God who loves you and wants you to rest in his promises, don't ever put it down.

Through what works has God shown himself to be faithful in your life? Can I confess to something? Sometimes I pray diligently and then never pay attention to see if God actually answers the prayer. If you want to keep your heart from being troubled, one of the best ways is to regularly remember when God has shown up in your life and praise him for it. Take the time to acknowledge the prayers God answers. Be reminded of his character and know that what Jesus says will come to pass. We can trust him, and that should impact the way we live now.

The impact of a promise is in its substance. A promise is only as good as what's being promised. If a promise is to change the way I live my life now, whatever is being promised better be good. Imagine if Jesus said "Let not your hearts be troubled. I go to prepare a place that is just slightly better than the one you are living in now." No thanks. But that's not what he says.

[John 14:2-3] ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

Jesus is referring to the Rapture, the future event where he comes back to gather all who belong to him, both those who have passed and those who are still alive. The purpose is to save us from God's wrath that is about to be poured out on creation, but more importantly, it's to take us to himself to be with him forever. We can have peace now because we know where and with whom we'll be. We are leaving this broken world and heading to the Father's house; heaven. It is a place of belonging, a place of unending rest, where we'll be in the presence of our Savior for eternity. Your heart can be free of trouble because, while your present circumstances are temporary, your salvation is permanent. And in the meantime, as we wait for Jesus to return and take us to himself, he has given us his body, the church, as a place of temporary belonging, where we get to experience a taste of heaven by being with his people.

We read that Jesus goes to prepare a place for us. He's creating something on our behalf, and that may give us a picture of him wearing a tool belt and putting up dry wall. But understand, Jesus doesn't prepare a place for us using the wood and nails of a carpenter, but by using the wood and nails of the Christ. His building materials are a wooden cross, metal spikes, and his own flesh and blood. His "going" is to the Cross, and it is through the destruction of his body that our place in the Father's house is constructed.

There's something else I want you to see here. One of great troublemakers of our heart is loss. But what the disciples perceive as loss, Jesus going away, is actually to their advantage. God may be taking something away from you right now, and it scares you to no end, and you are holding on for dear life. But perhaps what he is taking away from you now will lead to great gain in the future. The disciples wanted to hold on to Jesus, but if he didn't finish his work on the Cross, it would be impossible for any of us to be with him forever. Our hearts will be settled when we trust that the God who says "I am going away" for our benefit is the same God who

says “I am taking away” for our benefit too. The path to great gain is often through the experience of deep loss.

How often do you think about heaven, God’s dwelling place? How does thinking about heaven impact the way you live now? I have family and good friends who are dealing with health issues or the loss of a loved one, and oh man, the promise of being with Jesus forever is a source of great joy and comfort for all of them. But the promise of heaven doesn’t have to be relegated to a hope we hang on to when the end is near. In his book *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn says, **“God’s people in ages past had a source of strength and perspective largely unknown to us today: Heaven. It was their central reference point, the North Star by which they could navigate their lives.”** The promise of being with Jesus for eternity should overwhelm any trouble we’re having today. The difficulties we experience here are a blip on the radar when compared to the eternal future that awaits all who are in Christ. Let not your hearts be troubled. This broken world is temporary housing. Heaven is home.

The impact of a promise is in its source. A promise is only as good as the ability of the promise giver to make good. Who and how it is going to be fulfilled?

[John 14:4-6] ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can 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 except through me.”

Jesus says they already know the way to obtain the fulfillment of this promise. It’s not new teaching, he’s told them multiple times. But the disciples are still struggling, in part because of their troubled hearts. Take comfort in the fact that Jesus doesn’t deliver a smackdown at the question. He honors Thomas’s desire to know and be with him. God wants you to know, so ask questions. The challenge is that we believe what he reveals to us and live in light of it.

Thomas wants Jesus to drop a pin on his map so that his GPS can get him to where Jesus is going. He wants to know the way. Jesus answers with one of the most profound and majestic passages in all of Scripture: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. Jesus is the way because it’s only through him that we can have access to God. He is the bridge of reconciliation. Jesus is the truth. Not only does he speak truth and give truth, but he is truth as the revelation of God. When we see Jesus, we see God. Jesus is the life, as both the creator at the beginning of time and as the giver of new life for those who believe in him.

So in this promise of heaven, that means Jesus is the builder who makes it, the mover who takes us there, the road we travel to get there, and the neighbor when we arrive. How are you trying to get to heaven? How are you trying to be right with God? Where are you looking for truth? Jesus’ words are very clear here. No one comes to God except through him. There is no other way. Thankfully he is a freeway, and all are welcome.

If you are here this morning and checking out Christianity or are a follower of Jesus and have had the question of if Jesus is really the only way, I want to talk to you about what we believe and why we believe it. We believe we lost our way, and in losing our way we were separated from God and there was nothing we could do about it. But God could and did. He made a way

for us to be right with him, but that pathway is specific, it is singular. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. That he was God who took on flesh, he became a person. We believe that he lived a perfect life, the one we were supposed to live. He never lost his way. We believe that he unjustly suffered a criminal's death on a cross, and that was sufficient payment for how we went wrong and offended God. And we believe he was buried and was raised again three days later.

If that's true, the life he lived, the claims he made, and his resurrection, we are going to believe what comes out of his mouth. That means what he says isn't just true. It is the truth because He is truth. So when he says "I am the way...no one comes to the Father except through me", we take him at his word, even though it eliminates all other options. I understand how this passage could sound dogmatic, and the use of "no one" sounds exclusive. But we also believe Jesus when his Word says he doesn't want anyone to perish. He doesn't want anyone to stay separated from him. The offer of salvation is for everyone. And you know how I know that? Because Jesus says there are a lot of rooms! There's room for everyone. It's a gift Jesus offers you. All you have to do is accept it in faith.

I don't know where you are this morning. If you have not trusted in Jesus and taken hold of the promise he makes in this passage, I pray you do this morning. What I do know is that for those of us who have, whether decades ago, or seconds ago, we likely have some troubles in our life that try to take our eyes off of eternity. So I want to close with some words often read at a funeral to comfort the surviving members of a family. But I want to read them with you while we are all alive, not only as comfort, but as encouragement to live with the hope of eternity in our hearts.

[1 Thessalonians 4:16-18] ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

What an encouragement indeed. We can trust in the promise of God to forever be in the presence of God because of the provision of God. If you are here this morning with a case of heart trouble, let me offer you again the good news I started with. *Don't worry. It's going to be ok.*