

John 14:1-6

Easter 6, May 22, 2022
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"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 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. 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.

"Don't be afraid, everything's going to be ok." These are the types of things that your parents likely said to you when you were a child, the types of things you might say when a child wakes up from a bad dream. "Shhhh, it's ok, you're going to be ok. It was just a bad dream." It's true that fear in a child is often the result of ignorance, they don't know as much as an adult knows, so they tend to get afraid of a lot of things. Sometimes that can be frustrating for us as adults. When a child gets upset about something that's really very small, sometimes it can be frustrating because even when you try to reassure them, it's like they don't trust you.

The temptation might come them to not soothe them with a gentle, "Shhhh, everything's going to be ok," but instead to start yelling! "Stop crying!" "Stop being so afraid all the time!" The problem is, you're not going to comfort a child by yelling at them. You can't soothe their fears with commands.

I was thinking of this when I was working on this sermon text, because I noticed one Bible translation had a really poor translation of the first verse of our text. It's from the CSB Bible. They translate the first verse as, **"Your hearts must not be troubled!"** They translate Jesus' words as if He was sternly wagging His finger at the disciples, yelling, "Come on, man up! Stop being so scared!" But that translation really misses Jesus' tone here. He's not yelling at them like a frustrated parent. He's comforting them, He's encouraging them, **"Let not your hearts be troubled."**

You see, throughout John chapters 14, 15, and 16, Jesus is sitting with His disciples in the upper room, and He's seeking to calm their troubled hearts. And they had a lot to be troubled about. They weren't like children afraid of the boogeyman or monsters under the bed. No, they had very real fears: they knew there was a plot to kill Jesus, Jesus had just *told* them that He was going to die, *and* Jesus had told them that they were going to be persecuted too! And they would be! After Jesus ascended into heaven, many of these same disciples would be arrested and martyred for their faith.

Looking forward, then, to all of these very real fears, Jesus offers comfort to His disciples. He treats them like children with a soft, calming voice and saying, **"Let not your hearts be troubled."** This morning, He's giving us the same message, in the words of our theme:

"Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled."

- I. Trust Him to prepare a place for you
- II. Trust Him to bring you there

In verse two of our text, Jesus says, **"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?"** You might have memorized that verse a little differently, perhaps you learned, **"In my Father's house are many mansions."** That's often the more familiar translation for us, though it's kind of misleading. You see, the Greek word used here actually just means "room," so our text says, **"In my Father's house are many rooms."** Now, the Latin translation of the Greek also uses the Latin word for "room" which is pronounced "mansiones," and when the people who translated the King James Version of the Bible, they simply took that Latin

word, “mansiones,” meaning “room,” and wrote down the English word “mansion,” which does not mean “room.” And that’s what so many of us have memorized.

That’s not what Jesus is saying here. He isn’t saying “you might have a difficult life here on earth, but someday you’re going to get your own mansion in the sky!” Nope, it’s not that at all, in fact, what Jesus describes here is actually much more comforting and encouraging than that. He says, **“In my Father’s house are many rooms.”**

I didn’t grow up in an overly large family: a mom, a dad, two brothers, and we grew up far away from any of our other relatives. But the Lord blessed us through our church! There were a couple of families in our congregation in Milwaukee that we grew very close with who sort of adopted my family into their extended family. And some of the best vacations we ever had growing up were with these other families. A few times we all went down to North Carolina together and rented a beach house that was large enough to fit us all. And it was so much fun! Twenty-plus people who all loved each other, all gathered under one roof for a week with food and drink and games and laughter and fellowship. And when I picture this “Father’s house with many rooms,” that’s what I picture.

You see, we all know that getting together with family is wonderful, but I think we can all relate to the fact that usually when you are staying as a large group with relatives, there simply aren’t enough rooms. You might have to share a room with someone, there’s someone sleeping on the couch, many of the children are sleeping on the floor. You might get your own bed, but even then, it’s not your own bed so you don’t sleep quite as well as you would at your own home. And so, even though it was a fun week or weekend, you’re also likely pretty tired after it all and looking forward to getting back to your own house, your own room, your own bed. But even then, you have mixed emotions, because you’re just so sad to say goodbye to the people that you love so much.

Thinking about that, listen to how great Jesus’ description of heaven is: **“In my Father’s house are many rooms.”** First of all, there are *many* rooms, meaning there is ample room for you—you won’t just have to find an open couch or some room on the floor. And the particular word that Jesus uses for “room” indicates that this is a place to stay, a place to remain. It’s not somewhere you’re going to have to leave eventually with some sad, tearful goodbyes.

In the popular story *The Christmas Carol*, there’s this scene after Tiny Tim dies where Bob Cratchit says to his children, *“Life is made up of meetings and partings.”* And in this life, he’s absolutely right. Because of death, because of other sorrows, we’re constantly being separated—departures for a short time, for a longer time, forever—all from people that we love dearly. But in heaven, in our Father’s house, there will be no partings. There is no death there, no sorrow, no sin, and because of that, we will *forever* remain there rejoicing in the glory of our Savior with our fellow saints.

Jesus also calls this His **“Father’s House,”** which is a very intentional allusion to the House of God there in Jerusalem, namely the Temple. God had told the people that they could go to the Temple and that He would be there. If they wanted to go to God, they could always know where to find Him. But even while God was with His people there, the way the Temple was built was meant to remind the people that they were still separated from God. If you took a Bible History class when you were growing up or if, perhaps, you’ve seen a diagram of the Temple in your Bible, you might recall some of the details of the layout. Just outside of the Temple structure, there was an outer courtyard called the courtyard of the Gentiles. It was in that location where the Gentiles, that is non-Jewish people, were allowed to come and worship God, but they were unable to get any closer. There was this separation.

Inside of that courtyard, you would find the courtyard of the Jews, certainly closer to God, but there was still this sense of separation. An ordinary Jewish person could not venture on any further. Beyond that was the Holy Place where the priests were able to go and bring blood sacrifices to atone for their sins. Beyond that was the Holy of Holies, which had this thick curtain separating it from the rest of the temple. *Only* the High Priest could enter that room, and he only once-per-year—anyone else who dared to enter would die immediately. So the whole Temple was designed to remind people that while this was the place where they could come near to God, they were still separated due to sin.

Well, Jesus points to our dwelling place in His Father's House as being one of perfect fellowship both with God and with one another, and with *nothing separating us at all!* In Heaven, we will all be holy, all of our sins will have been washed away, and we will be clothed with the white robes of righteous. We will be surrounding our Father's throne, with no thick veil blocking our view. There will be no more sinful nature, no death, no temptation, no tempter. We will be *with* God.

And the main reason Jesus teaches us these details about heaven is to delight us, to give us something to be excited about. You know, when we're driving with our boys, say we're headed up to Eau Claire for Convention, eventually someone will start fussing in the back and asking how much further we have to go, asking if we can stop and stay at a hotel. When that happens, we'll say things like, "No, don't you want to see Grandma and Grandpa! We're going to see them soon! Uncle Nathan and Auntie Kendra will be there! They want to play Legos with you!" We want to get them excited so that they can persevere through the long trip.

Well Jesus does much the same for us here in our text. He tells us about what's coming for us in heaven to delight us, to get us excited. He says, *"This is where I'm going now, and soon you will be there too."* He uses the joy of this future reality to sustain us in the midst of our present troubles. He says this so that we may rejoice, even in the face of suffering, even in the face of *death!* It's just like with Stephen who was shown the vision of heaven as he was being stoned so that he could be glad even in his death. He was glad because he knew he was about to receive the crown of everlasting life, and that's the same crown that Jesus has laid aside for you and for me.

This is Jesus' response to our worries and our troubles: He doesn't yell at us, He doesn't get frustrated with us. He speaks comfort to us saying, *"If I'm going to prepare a place for you, certainly it will be a good place for you to stay, and I will certainly come again to take you there."* Jesus is the one that you can trust to prepare a place for you, and He's the one you can trust to bring you there.

You remember the days before GPS, when you had to pull out the map, or maybe you printed out directions from Google or MapQuest. Traveling was much more stressful back then. Maybe some of you still do those things—I don't; I really appreciate the ease of the GPS. Back when I first started driving, I was always worried about missing a turn. If you missed your turn, missed your exit, then you have to get off the road and figure out a new way to go. And it's always much more stressful if you're going to some place that you haven't been to before. The roads are unfamiliar, you don't have any landmarks to use as reference points. The people driving around you know where to go, and you're just getting in their way. Driving in a new place can be stressful for adults.

But instead of thinking like an adult, I want you to think like a child. A child doesn't care if their parents are lost or if they don't know where they are going. They absolutely trust that their parents will get them there. Even if mom and dad get lost, it's still not something to worry about because mom and dad always figure it out! No, a child is generally happy to sit in the back seat and not worry about how they're going to get someplace.

Well, Jesus wants you to adopt this childlike mindset, He says, ***“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.”*** And then He says this to His disciples, ***“And you know the way to where I am going.”*** And that throws them for a loop. Thomas is thinking like an adult and voices the concern that undoubtedly all of the disciples had when he says, ***“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”*** He thinks there’s something *he* has to figure out, that it’s up to him to find the way.

People do the same sort of thing with Christianity, and maybe we do the same at times. We do the same when we’re thinking about heaven, and that it’s up to us to figure out how to get there or at least make sure that we’re going the right way. We treat it just like driving—we like to look for the landmarks to make sure we’re actually going to arrive in heaven. One of those landmarks is our feelings. “Am I going to make it to heaven? Well, how do I feel? Do I *feel* forgiven? Do I *feel* like a new person? Do I *feel* close to God?” If we don’t feel those things, we can think we’re lost along the way.

Another landmark that Christians like to look for is the state of their lives. It’s this idea that if things are going well and we are healthy and happy and blessed, then that must mean that I’m good with God. And on the flip side, if things are not going well and I’m sick and I’ve lost my job, well, that must mean that God’s angry with me and He’s punishing me and there’s something I need to change in my life to get back into His good graces! By the way, neither of those things are true. Being wealthy and happy does not mean that God is happy with you, and being in trouble does not mean God is mad. No, God tells us, ***“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”*** (Matthew 5:45) He also says, ***“In the world, you will have tribulation.”*** (John 16:33)

So, if those are your landmarks on the road of life, you’re going to get lost, you’re going to get sidetracked and end up in the wrong place. The only landmark, the only map, the only GPS that we can use to know if we’re on our way to heaven is God’s Word. In that Word He tells us and His disciples, ***“You know the way to where I am going,”*** and then He follows it up by saying, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one gets to the Father except through me.”*** In other words, He’s saying, ***“Kids, don’t worry about how to get there, don’t fret about whether you’re on the right path.”*** He says, ***“Leave the driving to me.”***

He says, ***“I am the way.”*** The only way we will get to the Father, get to our room in heaven is through Jesus’ blood and righteousness, and that’s it. He says, ***“I am the truth.”*** He’s not lying. If you’re wondering how to get to heaven and if you’re on the right path, just look to Jesus’ Word! He says, ***“I am going to the Father, and I will come again to take you there also.”*** And that’s the truth. He also says, ***“I am the life.”*** He is the one who gave up His life as the sufficient sacrifice for your sins; His death was enough to completely pay for all sins, including yours. And then He took up His life again in glorious victory, so that even when we die, we may live also.

So, Jesus’ point is clear. He says, ***“I’m going to my Father, I’m going to prepare a place for you, and I’m going to return to take you there as well.”*** So don’t worry about how you’re going to get there or if you’re following the right directions. Leave the landmarks behind, because if you know Jesus, and if you know what He’s done for you, you know everything you need to know. So, sit back and relax, leave your troubles in His hands. He’s got this. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. He answers your prayers, He’s preparing a place for you, and He will return again for you and then show you to your room. Thanks be to God, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Amen.