

John 14:15–31

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[0 : 00] I'm troubled by COVID-19. I'm troubled by global unrest. I'm troubled by the death of God's image bearers who fall victim to the powerful, abusing power.

Hashtags mark the cry of humanity. Hashtag me too. Hashtag Hong Kong protest. Hashtag COVID-19. Hashtag I can't breathe.

These hashtags are pleased and they're indicative of the progress we've long desired in science, in equity, in justice have eluded us.

The unrest is irreversible. The scars are deep. The wounds permanent. The world is hurt and is haunted by individual and systemic sins that aren't fading away.

Rather, they are flaring up. Our modern world strangely runs parallel to this New Testament world. In the Gospels, we read a foreign occupation.

[1 : 12] The presence of nationalistic zealots. The dismissal of women. The death of the innocent, i.e. John the Baptist. Racial tensions. Samaritans and Jews. Our contemporary world runs alongside this New Testament world.

In many respects, it's as if the devil's tactics to undo humanity have not changed much because they're effective. They are enough to disrupt the world and trouble her inhabitants.

As Christians, what are we to do when our hearts are troubled? What are we to do when our hearts are filled with fear over these present days?

What are we to do when the prospects of the future are bleak? And this morning, we turn to the pages of the Bible, and we will find resources that the world does not and cannot provide.

This morning, I want to show you the kindness of the Lord Jesus. For he gives tonic for your trouble and medicine for your fear.

[2 : 26] I don't normally title my sermons. I'm not that clever. But I stumbled across one this week. I've chosen to title it, Two Gifts for Troubled Hearts.

Two Gifts for Troubled Hearts. Since your Bibles are opened, it may be helpful to recall that we are sitting at a dinner table. It's a most memorable meal.

They've had their feet washed, emblematic of Jesus' cleansing work that is soon to follow. They've watched Judas, one of their very own, initiate the sequence of events that would lead to the crucifixion of their beloved Lord Jesus.

John's account, it actually looks like a meal. You see it. He's trying to show us the conversations that are taking place. I've read a recent book, sequence of books, conversations with Jesus.

But here they are. Here they are. You see it. First Peter asks a question. Then Thomas, followed by Philip.

[3 : 31] And another question in our text this morning, in verse 22. Judas, not as scary yet, asks another question. So the meal is a genuine meal.

They're talking, discussing, conversing. The conversation has consisted of various parts. But generally speaking, Jesus is moving his disciples toward belief and faith.

Let me show you. That's why chapter 14. He wants them to have faith and believe. That's why chapter 14 opens up in the way it does. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God. Believe also in me. Again, in verse 11. He's trying to push them toward belief.

Believe me. Again in verse 12. Whoever believes in me. The aim of Jesus' instruction in verses 1 through 14 is belief.

[4 : 38] Belief. Faith in Christ is the goal of the conversation. However, this morning, beginning in verse 15, the conversation moves from faith and belief to love for Christ.

Instead of the question being, do you believe me? The question Jesus is subtly hinting at is, do you love me? Let me show you.

In verse 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. Again in verse 21. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

Again in verse 23. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. And negatively in verse 24. Whoever does not love me does not keep my word.

It is as to say, faith leads to love. And love is demonstrated through obedience. Faith is conjoined to works here.

[5 : 41] It's insufficient to merely emotionally love Jesus. It actually requires keeping his commandments. It's enunciated by the text four times.

Jesus wants to make it clear that it's not possible to love him and choose not to live for him. See, it would be intensely strange if you declared your love for another and deliberately neglected to adhere to the guidelines of that relationship.

Every love relationship has rules, whether spoken or not. Friendships remain intact when the laws of friendship are upheld. Marriages stay intact when the vows and pledges form the parameters or the rules or the commandments.

That guard it. You know, Blake and Margaret, you entered into marriage yesterday. Maybe emotionally in love.

But the relationship lasts not because of the emotions, but because of the commitment to keep the vows. It's on the heels of verse 15 that Jesus gives two gifts to those who put their faith in him.

[6 : 56] Two gifts for the troubled heart. This morning, I want to point out to you, there is the gift of God's eternal presence. Verses 15 through 26.

And followed by the gift of God's divine peace. The gift of God's eternal presence. And the gift of God's divine peace.

Knowing the anxiety that is coming upon the disciples because of Jesus' impending departure, Jesus would ask his father to send a helper. Up to this point, Jesus has been the help, all the help the disciples have needed.

He has been their ever-present help. But by this time tomorrow in the text, their ever-present help would appear helplessly suspended on a cross.

With this in mind, he summons the spirit of truth. One who is so likened to Jesus that John the writer calls him the spirit of truth.

[8 : 02] Right after Jesus himself has said he is the truth. They are not synonymous. But they are certainly synchronized to accomplish the father's purpose together.

You have the man of truth in the Lord Jesus. You have the spirit of truth in the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther comments on this passage.

He calls the spirit alter Christus, Latin, which translated literally means the other Christ. Another Christ.

There is much to be said about the Holy Spirit. This would not be the place to say it all. But we need to mention a few things. His name is, in Greek, perikletos, which, woodenly translated, is a compound word, para, which means alongside, and kletos, which means called.

He's literally called the called alongside one. Translators in the ESV have capitalized the word helper. Other renderings include the advocate, the counselor, the comforter.

[9 : 14] All these terms encapsulate the facets of the spirit's role in the believer's life. Interestingly, John, later on in one of his letters, taking this term advocate, this term perikletos, he actually calls Jesus the parikletos as well.

In 1 John chapter 2, where he writes, we have a parikletos, an advocate, with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. John sees the spirit and Jesus as distinct, but their mission is so united, so fused together, that together, Jesus and the spirit are those who walk alongside the believer.

He is for the believer, the Holy Spirit, like salvation, a gift from the Father. He's a gift. The spirit is not someone you can manipulate or to have more, or to have more mightily, or to a greater degree, if you contributed more, if you did more, if you pledged more.

The spirit is clearly a gift, according to verse 16. In the same way Jesus is received, their salvation through Jesus is received as a gift, the Holy Spirit as a person is a gift.

And you might remember this story, if you are a student of the Bible, you remember that story in Acts chapter 8, where this magician named Simon is so intrigued by the apostles that they're able to impart the Holy Spirit.

[10:56] And so Simon, being a magician, wants the next trick, or he wants the next gig, or he wants the next means of profit. And so he goes to Peter, one of the apostles, and he says, hey, can I get some of that?

Can I actually buy some of that? And you may recall the words of Peter. They're a harsh rebuke. He says, may your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money.

The spirit is a gift. It's not someone you can manipulate to have more of. And the spirit rather flows out of the requests of Jesus from the kindness of God the Father to be this persistent, continuous help for the disciple.

The spirit is a forever helper, according to verse 16. Those words, that word jumped out to me. It's like emboldened and capitalized in the text. He is a forever helper. He is not a temporary help. He is not a hired help. He is not extra help.

[12:12] He is your ever-present help at all times. He is there when you rise and when you wake. He is there when you lie down and sleep. He is God's pervasive, eternal, forever help for you.

How? According to the end of verse 17, He dwells with you, and He will be in you. At the moment you're born afresh, He's there.

And as these disciples anticipate abandonment, rejection, and desertion, He tells them that He will be eternally present with you.

They would not be left as orphans. They are not helpless children left out in the open. They were not children exposed to the oppressive world. We know in Greco-Roman times that babies were just left in garbage heaps exposed to the world to die.

But here, the disciples would not be left in that way. Jesus would not abandon them. He would not abandon them because He would summon a helper.

[13:27] And He actually doubles down on that statement. Maybe, it's probably more appropriately, He triples down on this statement of permanent accompaniment. You see it in verse 23.

Because according to verse 23, after Jesus summons the Spirit from the Father to give to the disciples, in verse 23, Jesus replies, If anyone loves Me, He will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to Him and make our home with Him.

The disciples would not only have the Spirit's accompaniment, indwelling, and empowerment, according to verse 23, Jesus says, We, My Father and I, would come and make the believer their home.

What this text is telling us is that the entire Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, would come to them and establish their residency inside the believer.

All of God in all of you. It's staggering. All the powers of creation embedded in you. All the mercy of God embedded in you.

[14:40] All the resources of the Holy Spirit embedded in you. And you cannot increase it in some way. You cannot diminish it in some way.

It doesn't reside in you less because you're black. It does not reside in me less because I'm Asian. It does not reside, He does not reside in you more because of ethnic background, social class.

It's staggering. Jesus announces to them that as He leaves to prepare a place for them, He's actually preparing them to be a place for Him.

Oh, all of God in all of you. He would be with them forever. As God was with Moses, He would be with you.

As Moses was dispatched to confront Pharaoh and his empire, he was certainly filled with fear, but the promise was made, but I will be with you. And as Joshua was looking over the ridgeline to enter the promised land, a land of abundance, but filled with adversaries, surely his nerves were calmed by the promise, I will be with you.

[16:07] As David reflects on his life and wants to erect a magnificent home for God, God reminds him, I took you from a shepherd boy to make you the prince of Israel.

Why? Because I was with you. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood in the fire and it's attested that there was a fourth individual, one like the Son of God, preserved, because the Lord was with them.

The disciples did not drown in the storm. Why? Because Jesus was with them. And from this point on, what the disciples needed to know is that God, that Jesus, that Spirit would go with them

forever.

Forever. Forever. ever. His abiding presence. Never alone. Never abandoned. Never an orphan. So whether you wake up in the comforts of your own bed, or you wake up in the confines of a sterile hospital room, God is with you.

[17:20] Whether you walk through the dark and lowly valley of life, or you find yourself approaching the highest and brightest summit of your life, God is with and in you.

Whether you are weeping and wailing from tears of pain and hurt, or whether your tears fall with joy and gladness, God is with and in you.

He is with you through it all. He is never more with you than He is now. He is never less with you than He is now. He is fully, entirely, completely with you and in you.

And this is the Father's gift. This is our great comfort. This is the tonic for the troubled heart. Oh.

He is with you. And you want to know what's striking in addition to the fact that He is with you?

Jesus would not only be with them through the Spirit, but He would be with them in word.

[18:33] How do we know that the Spirit is with us? Well, it tells us. The Holy Spirit is tasked. One of His tasks is outlined in verse 26.

He will teach you to the disciples. He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. The answer to Judas' question in verse 22, God, Jesus, how will you manifest yourself to us?

How will you be in us and how will you make that known to us? Well, the answer is in verse 26. The Spirit will make Jesus known through the words that He has spoken.

It's almost like this misdirection. How are you going to manifest yourself to us? And Jesus replies in verse 23, keep my word.

Well, that's not the question I was asking. How will you make yourself known to us? Verse 24, keep my word.

[19:44] Well, that's not what I'm looking for, Jesus. How will you make yourself known to us?

Verse 26, the Spirit will bring to your remembrance my word.

what I have spoken. You see, the Spirit would uniquely guide and teach the disciples all things and bring into remembrance all that Jesus has taught.

This is the cooperative work of the Spirit, enabling the disciples to jot the truth down. This is what the Apostle Peter writes about in his second letter where he says we are not following these creative myths or these devised tales.

or human interpretation, but we are men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Bible holds authority because it was authored by the Spirit of truth bearing witness to the man of truth.

The twelve would be uniquely gifted to bring into remembrance all that Jesus had said. I want to unfold this a little bit more. If you asked me, Bing, write down, I've been married eleven years, write down everything that Christy desires or commands or instructs.

[21:12] It'd probably take a page, not because she hasn't told me much, but because I remember little. Because that's who we are.

we're forgetful people that I need to be reminded often. And Jesus knew this. And so Jesus would provide his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to lead them into all truth.

See, I would be hard-pressed to come up with a page for the preservation of my marriage. It says something of my listening and memory skills. And certainly the apostles needed God's help for the preservation of the faith once delivered to the saints.

The Spirit was a direct teacher to the apostles. This is what we mean by inspiration. Certainly quality Christian books today are written by Christ following authors that yield truth because they are written by Spirit-inhabited people.

But those books will never enter this book. This isn't to say that those aren't good books. They may be good books, but they are not God's books.

[22:29] You see what I did there? They may be good books, but they are not God's books. I've had bizarre words spoken to me, over me. I've had religiously minded individuals say things out of their personal experiences to correct or instruct me.

I myself have had religious experiences, and there are times where I think the Spirit is saying something. But it's important to know personal experiences never displace the Bible as laid down.

This is what's unfolding here, that Jesus is giving the apostles almost in, I don't want to say an infallibility, but along with the Holy Spirit, that the word that they will inscripturate becomes truth, the truth that bears witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of Truth will not contradict the man of truth. The Spirit will not reveal something that is in opposition to the Son. He cannot, or else the Godhead is confused.

We may cling to personal experiences or visions, but let us be aware that they don't displace the truth, Jesus Christ.

[23 : 58] And I don't want to discredit personal experiences. They're valuable. They're meaningful. They're real. They're tangible. They're verifiable. But personal truth is not God's truth.

You must remember that. That is why two of us can engage in dialogue, arguing from personal truth and personal experience.

experience. Which one of us is right? We're not sure. Because given our position in dialogue, in conversation, we will assert that we know the truth out of personal experience.

But that is entirely different from when God reveals His truth to humanity in the Lord Jesus Christ. Experiences of personal truth are not equivalent to the penultimate truth of the Bible. The question that Judas asks is answer.

[25 : 13] Keep my words. Keep my commandments. The Spirit will help you recall all that I have said and taught. The disciples need not be troubled for they would not be left as orphans.

Secondly, and far more quickly, they would be given the gift of divine peace. Divine peace. They would not be left restless and alarmed for they would be given the peace of Christ.

Verse 27 highlights this second gift, the gift of divine peace. It is a peace that is not self-directed. It is not self-discovered.

It is a peace that is not accomplished by self-medication, self-meditation, self-manipulation. It comes from the gracious hands of Jesus.

In the same way that the Holy Spirit is a gift of the Father, the peace of Christ is a gift from the Son. What is our world's idea of peace?

[26 : 15] Absence of war and conflict. Absence of injustice, disunity, and disharmony. Absence of difficulty, hardship, and suffering. What is your idea of peace? Maybe escapism, tranquility.

But Christian peace is not deliverance from turmoil. It is the recognition that peace can be experienced in every circumstance. The peace of Christ is not contingent on circumstances.

In the same way that the presence of God is not contingent on where you are or what makeup you are, He's all God is in all of you.

The peace of God is accessible at all times, regardless of circumstance. The disciples have little idea what lies before them.

They have just been told that they will not be abandoned. Only in a little bit, they will be abandoning Jesus. Their tribulation will only increase according to chapter 16, verse 33.

[27 : 19] And so Jesus gives them an offer, a gift of supernatural peace. Matthew Henry writes it this way, The peace is of such nature that the smiles of the world cannot give it, nor the frowns of the world take it away.

It is of such nature that the smiles of the world cannot give it, nor the frowns of the world take it away. It is divine peace accessible to all who belong to the Lord Jesus.

Jesus was preparing troubled hearts by bestowing on them two gifts, the gift of his eternal presence and the gift of his divine peace. These are things the world cannot receive, according to verse 17.

These are things the world will not see, according to verse 19. these are things the world cannot give, according to verse 27.

These are inaccessible to an unbelieving world, yet they are amply available to those who love Jesus.

[28 : 34] And perhaps this morning you're unsure of what I'm talking about, because you neither sense this presence, nor this peace of God during these days. you are rightly troubled.

In the way that I am, in the disproportionate taking of black and brown lives, you're righteously furious when justice is enacted without due process, you protest when the weak are preyed upon, the vulnerable exploited, and the defenseless are abused, and your heart is troubled, rightly troubled, and you're fearful, similar to the disciples.

But it needs to be made clear that what is troubling them is not social unrest. What is troubling the disciples is not an incurable virus.

What is troubling the disciples is not relational betrayal, which they just experienced, or relational hatred. But what's troubling to the disciples is the loss of Jesus.

The concern for the twelve is the absence of Jesus from their life. You see, the great peril that you and I can walk into is the belief that somehow we can walk through life without Jesus and be okay. [30 : 15] I don't want to belittle the events of our day, but I do want to magnify this question in our text. What does one do with a life void of the presence of God?

How does one live without Jesus? Because this is the most troublesome question. man, this is the most fearful question.

And as we close this morning, I make the statement and assert there is this type of heart trouble that cannot be resolved by the offerings of this world.

There is a type of peace that cannot be known apart from Jesus. there is a fear that will persistently plague you whereby only Jesus can deliver.

Your soul, according to Augustine, will be restless until it settles and finds its rest in the Lord Jesus.

[31 : 26] And so Jesus rises from the meal. It almost seems like an evasive maneuver. Perhaps Judas Iscariot is on his way. Or Jesus needs a little extra time to unfold the next couple chapters to teach his disciples.

The text tells us the ruler of the world in verse 30 is in hot pursuit. And little does the devil know that the prince, he will meet the prince of heaven on the next day.

And the prince of heaven will prove himself victorious by securing the soul of his fearful disciples.

Father, we come to you this morning and we need these gifts for our troubled hearts. The fact that you are with us, that all of you, Father, Son, and Spirit is with and in us.

And that you have given us peace. Peace not to avoid this world, but peace to live through this world and manifest the saving and securing and stabilizing presence of the Lord Jesus in us.

[32 : 47] And so, Father, we pray for the troubled heart, that you would lift us up, that we would see the Lord Jesus reigning, ruling, interceding on our behalf.

We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen.