

The Antidote to Anxiety

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[0 : 00] Well, we'll begin our time in God's Word this morning by reading our passage, and it comes from the Gospel of John, chapter 14.

If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up. We'll be reading the first six verses. The Gospel of John, chapter 14, verses 1 to 6. This is Jesus talking. Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me.

My Father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.

You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way?

Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[1 : 13] Many of these words of Jesus are quite familiar to us. Some of them are often quoted or found in devotionals, such as verse 1.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. Some of them are found in songs, such as verse 2. My Father's house has many rooms, or as the old King James says, mansions.

If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And some of these words are known to be among Jesus' greatest claims. Verse 6.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. So if you've been following Jesus for a while now, you probably know these words quite well.

These words are all somewhat direct and straightforward. And so often when we read them, we imagine Jesus speaking them right to us. But I wonder sometimes if we have taken the time to reflect on how these words hit the men that were seated around the table that night with Jesus.

[2 : 27] It's the night of Jesus' betrayal. The Passover meal has just been served. The bread and the cup passed around. Judas has already left the building.

And Jesus is giving his last words to his disciples before his arrest and execution. There's been kind of an ominous tone to this night so far.

Jesus has been quite troubled, we heard earlier. He's been speaking about his betrayal. He's been hinting at his death through this symbolic gesture with bread and with cup.

And just now he has told them right before this, which we heard last week or a week before, he will be with them only a little while longer.

He's about to go somewhere that they cannot follow him. So I want you to imagine this morning that you are one of the disciples seated around the table with Jesus this night, seeing and hearing these things.

[3 : 33] What are you thinking? Perhaps you're thinking, what's going on here? What are you talking about, Jesus? Why are you so troubled?

A traitor among us? Who? You're leaving us? When? Like tonight?

Tomorrow? Surely not while we're here in Jerusalem. With all that's going on, the disciples were deeply troubled that night.

Probably they were quite anxious, having no clear picture about how things were going to unfold, what was coming next. And usually when trouble arose, Jesus was their emotional rock.

I think about that time when there was a storm out on the Sea of Galilee and Jesus was sleeping in the boat. That was kind of a picture of how Jesus often was in the midst of trouble with his disciples.

[4 : 43] He was calm. He was cool. He was collected. Seemingly unbothered by the threats and the plots of the religious leaders. As fearless as a man can be.

And he was always encouraging them. But now even Jesus seems deeply troubled. So if I'm sitting at the table with Jesus and he's troubled, I'm starting to feel a little unsettled.

And now you're telling us, Jesus, that you're going away? You're leaving us all on our own? Well, Jesus sees the anxiety and the unsettledness in their hearts.

He can read the confusion and the distress in their faces. So he looks around the table and he says these words, Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Now, if that was all Jesus said, these words might feel kind of cliché, maybe a little empty. I mean, how many of you have been in a situation where somebody saw that you were worried and they just kind of said to you, Don't worry about it.

[6 : 02] Just stop worrying. Don't worry. I mean, those words by themselves, they don't really help a whole lot. Whenever we hear that, we're kind of waiting to hear what the person's going to say next.

Like, why shouldn't I worry? Do you have some good news for me? Is there something you see in this situation or understand about it that I don't? Maybe you've got some timely wisdom or encouragement for me.

I mean, I'm feeling anxious about things. And oftentimes when we feel anxious, it seems, to us at least, that we're anxious for good reason.

So there's got to be more here than just, Well, don't let your hearts be troubled. Jesus isn't just saying, Stop feeling that way. It's not good. It's bad for you.

There's got to be more. What truth will Jesus speak to put our hearts at rest? To give us deep, inward peace instead of anxiety in the midst of this storm that's brewing?

[7 : 08] Well, one of the things we often hear from other people is, Don't worry. Everything's going to be all right. Everything's going to be okay.

Nothing bad's going to happen. Does Jesus say that? No. I mean, if Jesus did say that to the disciples, we might take that as a comfort because Jesus is right about what's coming down the line a hundred percent of the time.

That would be quite comforting. But most of the time when other people say this to us, you know, everything's going to be all right. We know that they're just trying to make us feel better or to ease our fears.

And maybe inside, as they say that to us, we're wondering, Well, how do you know that it's going to go well? That everything's going to be all right? What if my fears, what if my concerns are reasonable?

What if there is some real potential of danger here? Something I should be worrying about? No. Jesus doesn't say everything's going to be just fine.

[8 : 17] Because the truth is, God allows us to go through things that aren't always just fine. Jesus is about to suffer something terrible.

Something bad is about to happen. And even though it will, in the end, it will all be fine, in the meantime, it's going to be awful. It's going to be horrible. It'll be almost unbearable for the disciples. So Jesus doesn't give them some false hope. Instead, he points their attention to the only thing that can be their anchor in the midst of the storm that's coming.

Jesus says, believe in God. Believe also in me. Now there's some variety in the translations here. You may notice this in your Bibles. Some have it as a statement. You believe in God? Believe also in me. Others have it as a question. Do you believe in God? Believe also in me.

[9 : 24] And some have it as a kind of parallel commands. Believe in God. Believe also in me. And unfortunately, today it's not possible to know which one Jesus meant because in the original language it could be either a statement, a question, or a command.

All of it is spelled the exact same way. Probably the Greeks in John's day would have understood simply by the context which it was. And we're kind of left today to guess.

My guess is that Jesus is just simply encouraging them to believe in God. That this is a command. That this is a word of instruction. Just as he often did when he chided them for their lack of faith. Believe in God. What will set the hearts of the disciples at rest with the uncertainty and sorrow and grief of the days ahead?

God will. No thing can give peace. True peace, a settled heart will only come through relationship with God.

[10 : 42] And so Jesus instructs the disciples to look to him. And not just to look to him but to believe in him, to trust him. have you ever had this experience before where you're worried about something or maybe even you're just worried and overwhelmed about everything and you open your Bible and you start to pray and you begin to read and take to heart the things that you're reading.

Things about God, things about you, things about our world and suddenly, almost unexplainably, it's like the worry just lifts.

The anxiety evaporates and this deep settled peace sets in to your heart.

all of a sudden you come to see that you don't need to worry about anything because God is powerful, he's good, he's in control of everything, he's directing everything for our good, he loves us, he knows what we need, he's watching over us and even if he allows us to go through something that's hard, he promises us in these pages to be with us, to carry us through it and we find in these pages assurance that he never breaks his promises.

We read in these pages that no matter how it goes in the short term, in the long term, we win, we have victory through Jesus, everlasting life with him.

[12 : 34] I hope you've had that experience before, I know I have and it's such a blessing. The great antidote to anxiety and worry is simply this, believe in God, put your trust in God and Jesus follows this up with a second word of instruction, he says, believe also in me.

We're going to see this more and more in the verses ahead here, Jesus will emphasize his oneness with God the Father, he will speak to the disciples in terms which put him on the same level as God. Trust in God, he says, trust also in me. Now, what does this mean for the disciples? Think about their story, think about what they've been through.

Jesus is calling them to count as true everything that he has been saying to them up until now, everything they've come to believe about him up until now.

It's like Jesus is saying, hold on to that faith that you have in me. Believe in me. And why is this so important? Because from a human perspective, everything is about to go wrong for Jesus in the next hours.

[14 : 20] By tomorrow, they will see his dead body hanging on a Roman cross. And the temptation to doubt all that Jesus has said to them over the past weeks and months and years will be very strong.

The majority of the Jews will be decrying Jesus as a blasphemer and a fraud, a man worthy of death. Some will be saying, look, if he really was the Messiah, this would never have happened to him.

if he really was the son of God, he'd be able to save himself. So this is the moment of testing. This is the big question.

Will the disciples hold on to their faith in Jesus through all this? Or will their faith in him wither and die as they watch this unfold?

Believe in me also, says Jesus. You're going to have to simply trust me through all this. Those of you who have had children or have spent time with young children, perhaps you found yourself saying words like these to your kids.

[15 : 44] Just trust me. the worry in a child's heart can sometimes gush and flow with such strength. What about this, mom?

Dad, what about that? What if this happens to our family? And on and on it can go and come. And you find yourself saying those words, trust me.

As parents, we've lived a few years longer than our children have. We know how things go. We have experience. We know when the fears and the anxiety of our children are so far beyond the realm of possibility that it's just simply not going to happen that way.

But no matter how hard we try to reason with them, sometimes we simply come to that moment in the conversation where we just ask them to trust us.

To just lay aside all those worries and fears about a situation and to accept what we tell them about what's going on.

[17 : 00] What are we doing? We're calling our kids to take their eyes, off of the endless uncertainties and instead to just put their eyes on us.

Someone they know who has been there, who has been through that, who understands how this works. Just trust me, says Jesus.

Believe in me. Even though you can't see what's coming, even though your feelings and your thoughts will betray you, believe in me. Remember the things I said.

Remember the things I did. As surely as you can trust God to look after you, you can trust me. Believe in me, says Jesus.

All the things I said to you, they will all hold true, even through the storm that's coming. Well, how about you this morning, today, here?

[18 : 11] Do you have some anxieties, some fears, some worries that have been gnawing away at you?

Certain trains of anxious thoughts that keep coming back, that have been troubling you over the past days, maybe weeks.

We may not be in the exact same situation as the disciples were that night. I mean, they were about to live through arguably some of the most soul wrenching, sorrowful trouble imaginable.

But did God fail them? Did Jesus fail them?

If God could bring them through their time of trouble, can he not bring you through yours and me through mine? If Jesus promises to them held true, even though they watched him die, before their very eyes, will his promises to you and me not hold true as well?

[19 : 31] I believe Jesus would say these very same words to us today about whatever troubles, whatever anxieties, whatever worries are rising in our own hearts. Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God. Believe also in me. now we come to verse two.

Very familiar, precious words. He says to them, my father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am. Finally, here comes the specific truth that the disciples have been waiting for, the truth that will undo their anxieties and settle their troubled hearts.

What are the disciples worried about here? Well, as we've seen, there's lots of things going on that they could be worried about, but one of the specific things that they're worried about is Jesus leaving them.

[20 : 47] Glance back up to verse 33 of the previous chapter. Jesus says, My children, I will be with you only a little longer. Where I am going, you cannot come.

And it was Peter who asked the Lord, Lord, where are you going? Verse 36, and Lord, why can't I follow you now? verse 37, and now it's Thomas expressing his concern.

Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? This is a big deal for the disciples. They've been with Jesus for the past three years now, following him everywhere he goes, traveling with him, living with him, eating their meals with him.

By now, some of their lives and what they were doing before this, their jobs, all of it's kind of starting to fade into the background. They've been part of this incredible experience.

They've found the Messiah, God's chosen king for Israel, and they've been following with great anticipation, waiting to see how all of this will unfold, how God will restore the kingdom to Israel.

[22 : 00] And what's more, they've been there through all of the tensions that have been rising between Jesus and the religious leaders, tensions that are now at a breaking point.

And you're telling us now that you're leaving us? That you're going away? Well, no wonder they're feeling troubled in heart, worried, anxious, unsettled.

But now Jesus gives them the truth that they need to set their hearts at rest. My Father's house has many rooms.

If that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.

What is the overall truth here that will set their hearts at rest? The truth is that even though Jesus is going away, even though Jesus is leaving, there's a purpose.

[23 : 18] And there's a promise that he will return and that they will be together again. First, the purpose. Why is Jesus leaving?

for what reason is he going away? Jesus says, I'm going to prepare a place for you. And if I'm there at the table, I'm imagining all kinds of questions rising in my own mind, things the disciples might be thinking of, questions like, well, what kind of preparations?

What needs to be prepared there in that place? What kind of place are you talking about? where is it? And unfortunately, Jesus doesn't elaborate in detail on every one of these questions.

He doesn't say what kind of preparations need to be made. He doesn't say what needs to be done there to prepare this place in the Father's house. And so we're back to just trust me, believe me, there's work that I need to do to make things ready so that there's a place for you in my Father's house, says Jesus.

But then with that purpose comes a promise, a wonderful promise. Jesus says, if I am going to prepare for you a place in my Father's house, then most certainly I will come back and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am.

[24 : 58] So the disciples are worried that Jesus is leaving and the truth that will set their hearts at rest is that he's not leaving forever. I will come back and I will take you to be with me.

This won't be the end of our time together, says Jesus. Oh, it's been a sweet past three years for these men to be on the journey with Jesus, to do life together with Jesus so closely.

But know this, says Jesus, this is not the end of our time together. I must go, I must make preparation, but I will come back and you will be with me again.

Like this, close, personal relationship, fellowship, just like we've had. It will go on when I return.

So there's so much here that the disciples don't understand, that they can't see of the future. future. But Jesus gives them a purpose for his leaving and a promise to trust that will carry them through the storm ahead and that will hold them for the rest of their lives.

[26 : 26] God will do it. What about us today? Even though we live 2,000 years later, even though we haven't been with Jesus like the disciples have, I hope you know that this purpose, this promise is for us as well.

you know, some days when we look out at our world, or when we read what's going on in the news, it's all too easy to become anxious, to become troubled in heart, to get unsettled.

But we have not been left alone. And we have hope. Jesus has gone away, yes, that he has promised.

I will come back and I will take you to be with me. And so no matter what goes on in our world, we can take hold of these words for ourselves.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. I'm coming back for you, says Jesus.

[27 : 52] Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Come. Let's pray. Amen. Lord, this was a long time ago that you said these things.

And it's hard for us to be patient. But I pray that our faith would not waver or fail. I pray that today each one of us in our moments of testing and trial, in the troubles that come our way, I pray that each one of us would find peace in you, in your promise to be with us and to return for us.

thank you that we do not have to go this life alone and that we have such wonderful hope to look forward to for all eternity with you.

May your name be glorified. Amen. Amen.