

King of Troubled Hearts

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 2019

Preacher: Rob Patterson

- [0 : 0 0] John chapter 13, starting at verse 31 of John chapter 13. When he had gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.
- If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you.
- You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, Where I am going, you cannot come. A new commandment I give you, that you love one another.
- Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
- Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.
- [1 : 1 7] Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, Will you lay down your own life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, The rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.
- Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. 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? 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.
- And you know the way to where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
- No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him, and have seen him.
- [2 : 3 3] Philip said to him, Lord, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.
- Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.
- How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.
- Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, or else believe me on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.
- Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. That's the word of the Lord.
- [3 : 4 5] Yeah, you take that, thanks. Thank you. All right, good morning. Axolotls are humanity's great hope of regeneration.

Did you know that? Axolotls are humanity's great hope of regeneration. In fact, scientists have been cutting them up for centuries, you know, chopping limbs off and watching them grow back perfectly, chopping it off again, watching it grow back perfectly.

And even before modern science got a hold of them, well, healers from all different groups actually got a hold of them too, and they thought they were magical because they could actually regenerate, not just heal, like if you chop one of our limbs off, we end up with a healed up stump, but they would actually grow the whole limb back.

And they thought they were magical. And so, before modern science, healers have been rubbing some kind of axolotl smooch, I don't know how they made it, but they've been rubbing that into wounds in the hope that that would actually cure people.

It didn't work. Quite painful, the axolotls. But what I want to suggest to you is that we see something in the axolotls that we crave. If we've, as a humanity, have been looking at them for thousands of years and envying something in them, there's something in them that we crave.

[5 : 07] that ability to regenerate, to repair perfectly, to seemingly live forever. And we want to live.

We want to live. Our hopes and dreams form around our living, not our dying. Our efforts in this are actually focused on this world, here and now.

Our moods are deeply affected by what happens here and now. we get upset when we're disappointed. We feel irritated with people who block our goals or don't deliver on what we want.

We're critical of them. We struggle when life doesn't turn out the way that we want it to. We put so much effort in trying to engineer the circumstances so life does turn out the way we want it to and it does deliver the things that we want it to.

We're talking about it. We're talking about it. We're talking about it. We're talking about it. We're talking about it. We're talking about it. Well, the disciples that Jesus is speaking to in this chapter were no different. They had a plan and an expectation of what Jesus would do, how he would be glorified, how he would rule, how they would benefit as his sidekicks, as his co-regents in a way.

[6 : 27] Their hopes were fully in him and what he could deliver to them right there and then. Not by going away, as he keeps saying, but by changing the here and the now.

So Jesus' foot washing in the beginning of chapter 13, that was really disturbing to them. That was kind of turning things around on their heads. That wasn't what they were expecting. Jesus talking about going away and even dying was certainly not part of the plan.

His talk of them abandoning, or him abandoning them, because that's how they interpret it, was devastating and even more so when he said they were going to abandon him.

Mentally, they were seriously confused. Emotionally, they were in turmoil. They knew what they wanted. They knew what their hopes were. And they weren't actually the direction that Jesus was going in.

There was this conflict. The more and more they trusted in Jesus and the more they listened to him, the more they realized that the way that he was viewing life in the world was so different from theirs.

[7 : 44] they were in turmoil. And Jesus stops at this point. He stops after saying to Peter, hey, you're going to abandon me in no time.

Tonight, you're going to abandon me. Three times, you're going to say, I don't know you. Jesus stops at this point, recognizes the turmoil of their hearts and addresses it directly.

And that's what we see in John 14, 1. Let not your hearts be troubled. Let not your hearts be troubled. And then he lays out three reasons why their hearts shouldn't be troubled.

And each one of those three reasons is linked to the need for Jesus to go away to make it possible. So let's look at those three reasons.

They're actually on the back of your bulletin. You can follow through with that. If you don't have Bibles, you don't know how to look through Bibles, then you'll actually get the Bible verses up on the screen. So you can follow that way if you prefer.

[8 : 47] But the first thing Jesus says to them is, trust me as I prepare the way. Let not your hearts be troubled, he says. Here is the time for trust.

And here's the things you need to trust in. Trust me as I prepare the way. Now, as I speak about trust, I want you to understand that the Bible, the original Greek has one word, which can be translated believe or trust.

So some of your Bibles will have believe and some will have trust. I'm going to use them interchangeably, just so you're aware of that up front. So remember that? Believe equals trust. So why trust?

Well, I think this is a principle that we should all be aware of. And if we're not, then we should be now, that trouble is the time for us to trust. Trouble is the crucible in which our trust is actually purified and developed.

And so trust is the thing that they need right now at the most when they really don't understand what's going on. What are we to trust in? Well, Jesus goes on to say in the second half of this verse, trust in God, trust also in me.

[10 : 02] Now, they're all over the concept of trusting in God. They understand that. They've understood. They've lived within the concept, been raised as another generation in the context of a religion that has been pursuing trusting God for thousands of years.

They understand that. And they know how God works too in the sense that his plan has gradually unfolded bit by bit by bit. And this promise is becoming more and more real to them and more and more desperate in their own hearts for it to be realized.

They understand what it means to trust in God. So what Jesus says here is actually really, really challenging. He says, trust in me.

Trust Jesus personally. After three years, you think of after three years of living with Jesus and traveling with him, they've got a sense of who Jesus is like and how trustworthy he is.

But Jesus is saying more than that. He's stacking their trust of God alongside their trust of him. So whether the coming storms, the challenges that are going to defy their expectations of how God's kingdom will unfold, they actually need to see Jesus for who he is.

[11 : 17] Not just another king, but the king of kings. And it's not just trust in Jesus, but he goes on to explain that it's actually to trust in Jesus to prepare the way for them.

He goes on to say in verse 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? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will take you to myself that where I am, you may be also.

There's a bit of a picture of movement going on there. Jesus talks about going. And where he's going here is to heaven, where the Father is, via the cross.

We've got to remember at this point, for us, we look back on this, we recognize that Jesus has already died on the cross. That's his history for us. But for them, it was future. So when he's saying going here, he's actually referring to him going to heaven via the cross.

And his going to heaven via the cross is to prepare a place for us in heaven through the cross. And then he speaks about coming again to take us to himself.

[12 : 31] What is he talking about here? These people are troubled. His closest disciples are troubled. They're deeply distressed. And so he starts to speak about heaven.

You could say the new heaven, the new earth, I'm keeping it down just to heaven for the sake of simplicity of expression. But what Jesus does to comfort them is he stops at this point and starts to describe heaven itself.

and how his going actually prepares their way into heaven. Now, I'm going to suggest to you that when we think about heaven, there are a bunch of different ways we think about it.

Rod's actually shared a few. There's a wedding feast, there's all kinds of different things. But I would say that the top three most common things spoken that people speak to me about that they're looking in terms of looking forward to heaven are these things.

not necessarily in this order either, but to be reunited with my loved ones. This is a common thing that people talk about. Looking forward to being in heaven to be reunited with my loved ones.

[13 : 35] Whether it be my husband, my wife, my parents, my children. Some of us know the tragedy of seeing our children die. To be reunited with them is just such an attractive thought.

Or perhaps, for you, it's to have an end to suffering. Whether it be personally within your own bodies and the promise that that body will be renewed into a body that will run and not grow weary, that will walk and never faint.

That concept of actually being renewed in that way is a relief to you because you suffer in your body. You're seeing the ravages of time or disease affecting it.

I know I'm, you know, some of you who are older will say, you know, I feel like I'm getting older and some of you who are older than me will say, you have no idea, you're spring chicken. But I feel like I'm getting older and I've shared with you before that I'd gotten to the stage a few years ago where I could go to bed feeling fine and I would wake up with an injury just from sleeping like a stiff neck or a sore back or my knee was aching.

I can tell you now, a few years on, getting to sleep, I actually have to find the position where I don't feel discomfort. This is from a time when I can remember falling asleep, well, I can remember because my parents tell me, I fell asleep standing up in the doctor's surgery while my mum was waiting in the waiting room to go in.

[15 : 06] I fell asleep standing up. Not only that, I fell asleep on parade in the Army Reserves and I actually staggered into the guy in front of me and he held me up until the sergeant woke me up and got me back to my position. I used to know how to sleep standing up and now, what's going on with my body?

This concept of actually having a renewed body is really attractive and if it's not that, if it's not the seeing my loved ones or the end of suffering, whether it be internally or what the world inflicts on me from outside, it's the concept of living in paradise.

Yes, there is something better than Newcastle out there, the idea of living in paradise and again, as Rod opened up, there are a variety of different views on what that paradise should look like.

Culturally, each culture has its own expression of what luxury looks like. Maybe it's for you. When we went to Tasmania, we sat in a nice hotel, Joe and I, it was great.

Every time we went out the room, it seemed that they would come back in and the bed would be made, everything would be tidied up, there would be more chocolates on the pillow, more than we could eat. They only give you them one at a time, but after a while, you can have enough of those.

[16 : 19] What is luxury for you? Being provided with meals, being in a luxurious setting, a widescreen TV in the bedroom? Joe? No? Things like that.

What I'm going to suggest to you is that all of these things, well, not the widescreen TV in the bedroom, that's not necessarily what's going to happen in heaven, but heaven will not be disappointing in terms of paradise.

We will not be thinking of heaven and being disappointed by the state that will be in there. But if we focus on these things, we're missing the point of heaven that Jesus is trying to get across here.

The focal point of this place is not the quality of the place, but the presence of our God. And until we understand that, and until we own that in our hearts as our ultimate value, to be in the presence of God, we're going to struggle and struggle and struggle again with what he delivers for us in life.

But let me suggest it to you in these terms. Joe's a good cook. I love her cooking. Not so pleased that she's no longer milk and dairy, sorry, dairy and gluten intolerant, sorry, that she's dairy and gluten intolerant, but I love her cooking.

[17 : 50] Now, I could list a whole bunch of different things that I love about Joe, all the different things I'm benefiting from as her husband. But if they were the sum total of our relationship, what would that be?

How would you judge me? A consumer of her. But to delight in her personally, that's what God is calling us to.

He's calling us to a relationship where he delights in us personally and he invites us to do the same. The focal point of this place that Jesus is preparing for us is not the quality of the place, but the presence of our God there.

So as we read these words, Jesus is saying, trust me as I prepare the way for you into the presence of God.

The God who's trappings you love, but who is far greater and more worthy of your love than anything he's provided for you. Jesus goes on.

[19 : 04] His lesson isn't finished here. He goes on and says, don't just trust me as I prepare the way, but trust me because of who I am.

Because of who I am. Now just understand here that when Jesus talks about himself being the way, he's talking about himself as the way, him personally being the way for us to come into relationship with God again.

And as he talks about himself being the way, we discover that there are two misunderstandings. It comes in the context of two misunderstandings. Firstly, Thomas and then Philip.

And if you have the ESV Bible app, then I'd encourage you to look up Thomas and Philip and look at how they're portrayed in the Gospel of John. They're not portrayed as the brightest people.

They're not portrayed as the most enthusiastically trusting people. But I'm going to suggest to you that both Thomas and John ask questions that we need the answers to.

[20 : 08] So praise God for them. Perhaps you're that person in your small group or in your friendship circle. You ask the questions that seem stupid to everybody else, but even the intelligent people actually need to engage with the answers of.

And let's look at Thomas. Thomas, he's straight away, as Jesus is talking about going and preparing a place. Thomas comes straight up with his question in verse 5, and he says to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going.

How can we know the way? Thomas has a literal interpretation here. He doesn't know the destination or the way, so we can tell that he's sort of existing on this literal level.

He's existing, he's thinking in the here and now. How is God engaging with my here and now? There's a saying we have, isn't there? Too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good.

Well, perhaps Tom, you could say, was, Tom, that friends here, Thomas, was too earthly minded to be of any good.

[21 : 11] Jesus sees this and responds to him. He says in verse 6, Look what Jesus says here.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. not the way in the sense of a signpost or a Google map search directions or simply the speaker of truth in a world where lies are so common or even the life in the sense of being an example of a good and moral and upright life.

Jesus says he is these things. Jesus is the way. He doesn't simply show the way. He came from the Father, a place Jesus told Peter that he couldn't go to yet.

And then by trusting in Jesus who died for us, we are now able to go with him back to the Father's presence. Jesus is the way.

And Jesus is the truth. He is the word of God in human form. Not simply a messenger, but God personally declaring himself, revealing himself.

[22 : 38] revealing himself to us and showing us to ourselves at the same time. Jesus is the way, he's the truth, and he is the life.

Jesus, what Jesus is saying here is, I have life within me. It's not something that can come and go. He's saying, I'm the source of life.

Life flows outward from Jesus, richly and abundantly from him into everything else that exists. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

When he comes, when he encounters Thomas and he's very earthly thinking, the way that he sees of breaking that mold, of breaking that mold of thinking, is to lift him out into a bigger understanding of what's going on by understanding who he is.

And he continues that with Philip because Philip has an issue as well. And Philip's kind of grappling with these things and hearing them and he's just going, oh man, this is just too hard. Like I said, you look him up in John and you'll discover that he's like a remedial learner, shall we say.

[23 : 52] And he said, oh look, show us the Father and it is enough for us. Do you know that sense of wanting more? As simple as Philip is in his asking this question, do you know that sense of wanting more?

When things happen and you just think, man, what is going on? How is Jesus real if this is happening in the world? How is this, how is Jesus, my saviour, if this is what he's letting happen in my life?

I could put up with it if I just got to see more of him. If I got to see something that convinced me, that just overwhelmed me and convinced me to carry on. Here's a man who is wanting more.

But in the context, the context that he's saying that is, he's wanting more than Jesus. Jesus responds, he says to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. In verse 9. For Jesus to prepare their troubled hearts for what's to come, they need to understand what he is doing.

[25 : 12] And more than that, they need to be clear about who he is. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

That's an exclusive statement because the personal God has come personally to rescue us back into a close personal relationship with him.

There aren't other ways. There is only one. And he's there right before them, urging them to trust in him.

So Jesus says, trust in me as I prepare the way. Trust in me because of who I am. And he goes on and finishes by saying, trust in me as you continue my work.

Each of these points up to this point have actually been focusing on trusting in who Jesus is and what he's doing. At this point, we start to see how who Jesus is and what he's doing has a direct impact on us now.

[26 : 22] These truths aren't just simply propositional truths. They're not just things we hold in our heads and they make us feel warm and fuzzy. These are truths that actually shape how we live, how we act.

That's what we see here and the word work is something that's worth understanding here and bearing in mind because even in these verses, these last few verses of this section, we actually get a bit of an understanding of what work is.

So I'll give you a definition of work. In its broader sense, is doing the Father's will that the Father be glorified. So when work comes up in these verses, doing the Father's will that the Father be glorified.

Let me have a look at what Jesus says in terms of continuing his work. In verse 12, Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do because I'm going to the Father.

Jesus' work is doing the Father's will that the Father be glorified and we're actually invited into that, into the same, to continue that. So everything from the words that he says to the things that he does, we read here.

[27 : 48] Everything from the words that he says to the things that he does, including miracles. Now that obviously raises a question for us. Does that mean that we should all be doing these kind of things, including miracles?

So when we take on the works that Jesus was doing, do we get to do miracles too? I'm going to say that's a possible application of what's being said here.

It's possible that what Jesus is saying is an outworking of this, as you do my work, that you will do miracles. But what he is definitely saying is that you will be doing the Father's will that the Father be glorified.

We focus so easily and readily on the miracle aspect and that becomes such a point of focus for us because we're concerned about the here and now. We're not seeing things the way that God does.

I don't want to write them totally out of the picture, but I do want to say to you that each point in which Jesus refers to his miracles as his works, those works have a purpose and that is that people might believe that Jesus is the one the Father sent.

[29 : 05] So they have a purpose in themselves. They point to Jesus. You don't actually have to do miracles in order to do that work. It's just one of the ways that that happens. May God choose to use that again?

Possibly. But definitely we get a sense of what it actually means to do the Father's will, that the Father be glorified as we look into what works are because Jesus goes, he actually says here, greater works than these.

How can there be something greater than what Jesus has done? How can there possibly be something greater than that? Let's have a look at how Jesus speaks of doing work.

And in chapter 4, verse 31, Jesus tells his disciples to do the work of gathering in the harvest. In John 6, verse 28 to 29, when the crowds that he just fed actually ask him what work should we be doing, he tells the crowd to do the work of believing in him.

In John 5, 21, Jesus tells his disciples that the Father's greater work is to raise the dead and to give them life. If we kind of just sort of bring all those things together, what we get is that the works that Jesus is talking about, these works are greater because from now on, they will actually be pointing to the completed work of Christ.

[30 : 35] Jesus' work will be completed. So when they talk about Jesus and they witness to him, they're witnessing to a completed package. that place is prepared in heaven for us.

He's not going to do it. It is prepared. It's done. It's not like Jesus has taken 2,000 years to build your room. The works are greater because from now on, they're pointing to a completed work.

When Judas left the meal to betray Jesus, he set that final act in motion. And Jesus acknowledges that in John 13, 32 where he says, Now is the Son of Man glorified and God glorified in him.

Judas left and set in motion the acts of that night which would lead to both his betrayal, his sentencing, and ultimately his death. witnessing to Jesus finish work is the greater work that we're actually involved in.

And just as we close up on this passage, I think it's really important to look at where Jesus lands us when he finishes what he's saying. He says, he goes into instruction on prayer at this point.

[31 : 57] And it's important that we understand this because doing Jesus' work is only possible in Jesus' strength. He says in verse 13, Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. I'm going to suggest to you that the way that we read these verses shows that there's a problem in our hearts in terms of our own expectations.

I'll give you a few different ways we can read them that demonstrate a problem. Firstly, we can read them and think, hey, great, a blank check. I can ask for whatever I want. It's like, think Aladdin and the lamp.

Just rub that lamp and I'm already starting to think, okay, so what am I going to spend my wishes on? We can read them and think, blank check.

But for any of you who have existed in that thought process, even for long enough to form a prayer, you will know the second thing that we react to these verses like, and that is, it doesn't work.

[33 : 10] It's a great promise on paper, but it doesn't work. I've tried it and I didn't get the answer. It's because we're thinking like the scientist with the axolotl, chopping it off and watching it grow back, chopping it off, wanting to find a way of actually improving our current existence.

Are we asking that the Father be glorified? Are we asking in the Son's name? I'm going to suggest to you another way and this is probably the way that, we're kind of a conservative evangelical church, I think this is one of the ways that we actually really struggle and that is this, I don't dare ask.

We're thinking, okay, whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, the Father may be glorified in the Son, okay. Yep, okay, that's got to be true, it's there in the Bible, I trust the Bible, but I'm not ready to trust the Bible in action so I don't ask.

Some things seem too big for me to ask, some things seem too presumptuous. We may even convince ourselves it's an act of humility that we don't ask.

How sad is that? Friends, we need to be thinking like people who are learning to trust in God just like the disciples were.

[34 : 40] Thinking like people who that trust is actually beginning to develop in our lives. Thinking like people who just long, love to see who Jesus is in his word, how God reveals himself to be and look at, take those promises that he makes for us seriously and start to want to see those things happen.

I think we need to pray accordingly. We need to pray big prayers. Let God sort out how he's going to deal with it.

There's no prayer that gets no answer. Every prayer gets an answer. It may not be the answer that you've envisaged, but pray big prayers. Friends, don't shrink this promise down.

Don't empty of the extravagance of the invitation. Ask. And be reshaped by whatever answer you get.

Ask again. Let me say in conclusion that if you look at these verses, they're a call to trust in the context of troubled minds, troubled hearts.

[35 : 56] Our hearts, when they expect something in this world and they don't get what we hope for, our hearts as they're gradually being transformed to expect and not only expect, but to actually treasure what God says we should be hoping for.

Hearts that value the fact that Jesus had to go away to prepare a place for us. and that path took him to the cross and through the cross to heaven.

That he had to go to become the way for us. That he had to go to provide the greater works for us to be doing even now. And friends, when you feel that conflict in your hearts and that life is just not turning out how it should, recognize that troubled heart as the point at which you can learn more deeply these truths.

Learn more deeply to trust in Jesus. To lean on him instead of the kingdoms we're so busily building. To see the opportunities to do his work rather than our own.

To learn to long for the joy of being in his presence when our work is finally finished. Let me pray.

[37 : 24] Father God, I've got to confess that I can't value enough what you've done.

I can't appreciate it the way that I should because I am so conflicted. We are. We know life in this world. There's so many good things about the world that you've made and we just keep tripping up and making those things a main thing and forgetting the goodness of you, the one who provided all things.

Lord, we pray that you would show us the points of conflict in our lives where perhaps we're not even seeing any conflict whatsoever. We're just easily just giving ourselves over to building our own kingdoms.

Lord, bring us back to building your kingdom. bring us back through the sure knowledge that you loved us so much that you brought us into your kingdom even though we are as ignorant as we are now.

Lord, we thank you and praise you and we long for your return and in the meantime, Lord, grow us in appreciation of who you are. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.