

Keynote: Spirit and Works

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[0 : 00] So, hello everybody. Hello, hello. My name is Tad in Bowdoin, and I'm serving right now at St. John's as the interim youth pastor.

Oh, along with my wife Nicole in the back, she is the blonde hair wonder. Love you, baby. She is not a mother yet. Okay. So, the way that these introductory things work is I have to try to convince you that I am trustworthy enough to listen to.

Okay? So, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you a little biography of my life, and kind of throughout that, try to pick out my theological credentials so you can trust what I'm going to say.

Okay? Is that cool? Is everyone okay with that? Okay. All right. Here we go. I was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio. How many of you have been to Columbus, Ohio? Woo! Woo! Represent. O-H.

I-O. I-O. Okay. Great. So, most of my childhood was actually spent on a farm. Okay? I learned a lot of theological lessons on this farm that prepared me for the youth ministry that I am now engaged in.

[1 : 19] Okay? Okay? So, one that takes the proverbial cake, so to speak, was learning the fine art of chicken execution. Chicken execution.

So, you see, my dad had the contract with the zoo. And it was his job to basically raise about 200 to 300 chickens, systematically kill them, bag them up, and then send hundreds of those tasty little cadavers to the anacondas.

That was his job. Crazy. And so, what he did... Now, my father was a priest as well. He was a pastor. And what he did is he gathered up all the kids to teach us theological lessons on atonement theology.

Okay? So, the first method he came up with... Now, this is the first time. The first method that he came up with was called whack-em and sack-em. Now, you can guess what whack-em and sack-em was.

Whack-em was that you would grab the chicken, take a sledgehammer, whack, and then throw them in the bag. And then the second method, that didn't work. My dad felt really guilty about that.

[2 : 25] And he wanted to teach us a more humane way to systematically kill the chickens. And so, he came up with what is called shake-em and take-em. Shake-em and take-em was just basically grab the chicken, twist their heads, and then bag them up.

Now, here's what I want to reassure you. This was my first theological lesson as a young person. I was trained in the art of animal sacrifices.

And so, parents, rest assured that this guy knows about Old Testament sacrificial theology. Okay? Okay, but if that's not enough for you, let me just tell you a little bit about my love life with my wife, Nicole.

What I mean is this. Nicole and I are educated lovers. And what I mean is that we met each other in elementary school. We dated in high school.

We got married at the Ohio State University. And then spent most of our married life at Regent College here in the University of British Columbia.

[3 : 34] So, Nicole studied systematic theology. And I studied New Testament. We did our masters together. Ooh, baby, I tell you. We had some good theological discussion. Really good.

And then I just, I went on to go do another degree on second masters at Regent called a THM on the topic of reconciliation.

And in particular, I asked the question, what does it mean for Christians to reconcile with Aboriginal people after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Because right now, I'm currently engaged in a project where I'm working with Musqueam people to plant a church on the Musqueam Reserve right here in the Lower Mainland.

So, it's exciting. And it's an exciting project. So, enough about me. I hope that's trustworthy enough. Do you guys trust me? I would not trust me.

Okay, I'm kidding. So, let's pray and then dive into John 14. Okay? I'm calling this sermon, A Troubled Heart. I just want to pray and invite the Holy Spirit down one more time, if that's okay.

[4 : 43] Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you so much for today. We thank you that you have given us your word and you've given us this wonderful, incredible passage. I pray that you come right now, Lord.

Lord, and you bring peace to our troubled heart. In your precious name, amen. Okay, so since it's Mother's Day, I'm going to begin with a story.

Okay? Now, this story is meant to help us engage our imaginations so that we can enter into the story and feel what the disciples felt in this passage.

Okay? Okay. Okay. Do you remember when you were really young and your mom or dad dropped you off at a babysitter's you didn't really like?

Or left you with relatives or friends that were kind of scary and a little bit unknown? Or handed you over to a Sunday school teacher who made you eat tons of goldfish and play with felt boards?

[5 : 47] Do you ever remember that? Do you remember how you felt at that moment? I remember how I felt. I felt a kind of bewildering inward turmoil.

A kind of existential vertigo. Because the person in whom I found the deepest love and most comforting peace was about to leave me alone with someone I didn't know and someone I didn't trust.

And do you guys remember what happened after that? After she handed you over to the babysitter or the relative or the Sunday school teacher? I do. The simmering.

Oh, the simmering of fear and anxiety eventually began to boil over into the biggest alligator tears and the most epic kind of wailing.

As the reality of her imminent departure set in. We all know this. When we hand over kids to the Sunday school teacher, they just start to cry. They get that feeling that something's not right here.

[6 : 50] Mom's leaving me in the hands of a stranger. And do you remember it? After mom saw those alligator tears. After mom looked at you and she said, oh my goodness, my boy, my little girl, their heart is troubled.

What does she do? Every time she tries to bring peace to your troubled heart by making a promise to you. She says things like this.

Honey, I'm going away for a little while. Daddy and I are just going to go have adult time. But I promise I will come back and get you. And then if your mom is really cool, she usually promises something more than just coming back to get you.

She would promise things like, and after I pick you up, we'll go get ice cream. Or when I come and get you, we'll go to the movies or go to the park or whatever your little heart desires.

And what happened after that? After mom said that, the fear and anxiety attached to the thought of her leaving. It begins to recede and a deep sense of peace and reassurance sets in.

[8 : 03] In other words, in those dreadful moments where the one we love most tells us she is going to leave us. And then hands us to a stranger. What keeps us going? What keeps us from completely not falling apart?

Is the hope that mom will stay faithful to her promises to us. That she will actually return to us. Take us with her. And that together we will do something that brings unspeakable joy, peace, and satisfaction.

This is what I'm trying to say. Trust in mom's character. Trust is the key word here. And the promises that she's made to us is what brings peace to our troubled heart.

So our little passage in John 14 presents us with a very similar scenario as the one I have just presented to you.

This text is about, I don't know if you caught it. It's very quick. In the first verse, in the 31st verse. This passage is about the disciples' troubled hearts.

[9 : 12] And how Jesus, who is about to go away, brings peace to their troubled hearts. By making them promises. About, I'm going to come back, take you with me, and I'm going to give you something beyond your wildest imagination.

Beyond your wildest dreams. And he's talking about the gift of his Holy Spirit. That's what this passage is about. So here's the context. I'm going to paint the picture. Then we're going to enter in.

And we're going to see how Jesus brings peace to a troubled heart. So Jesus in 1333, right before, has just told his disciples that he is leaving them.

And that they can't follow him. After three years of the closest, most intimate kind of relationship that men could ever have. This is like a John Eldridge retreat times ten.

Amazing. And so Jesus is telling them that he's going away. I'm going away, guys. And you can't follow me. And then worst of all, he tells his followers, my leaving is going to be so traumatic for you.

[10 : 23] It's going to be so fear-inspiring that even you, my closest friends, are going to deny me. Even you, Peter, my best friend, you're going to deny me three times.

If you look in the passage, that's immediately what happens before Jesus says these words. And upon hearing this, the disciples immediately experience, like the children in the story we just presented with the mother, this kind of bewildering inward turmoil.

This confusion that they feel when the ground seems to be shifting beneath their feet. So, and like children, Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Judas frantically try to ask Jesus about where he's going.

Where are you going? How can I follow? What is happening? They're panicking because of this. They're panicking because the intimacy and the love and the security that they felt around Jesus is being threatened.

They don't want to be left alone without his presence, without the inner peace that it has brought them over these past three years. That's why in John 14, 1, Jesus describes their hearts as troubled.

[11 : 47] Now, a few things we need to understand about this idea of a troubled heart, okay? So, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to talk about the word heart. I'm going to talk about the word troubled.

And then I'm going to combine them and set them in our passage so we can make some theological deductions out of them, okay? So, we can understand some key theological truths about this phrase, troubled hearts.

So, the first thing we need to get straight is the word heart, the concept of the word heart. When the biblical authors talk about the word heart, they do not mean the physical organ that goes...

and that cardiologists check out. They're talking about the governing center of who we are as people.

It's this very source of our interlife. The Bible often uses the word heart to be a description of what you're really like. Your real person, your inner person.

[12 : 49] What you're like at your core. So, basically, the heart is saying who you are as a person. The core, the very essence of your being. And so, the second thing we need to understand is the word troubled.

When Jesus talks about the disciples' heart being troubled, he's not talking about the Crowley family of Downton Abbey. When they are troubled, that their cup of tea isn't quite right.

That's not what he's saying. No. No. The Greek word that Jesus uses to describe this is the kind of bewildering turmoil that we've used to describe the child when his mother leaves him.

This inward turmoil that one feels when boating on stormy waters. The word literally means inward turmoil, stirring up, disturbed, unsettled, or thrown into confusion.

So, when we combine these two words, here's the idea that we get. Since our hearts are meant to find rest and peace in the intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, friends, we will experience a besetting anxiety at the very core of who we are as people.

[14 : 11] A kind of fundamental disorientation to life when that intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is absent from our lives.

So, Augustine, a 5th century theologian and bishop of North Africa, captured this idea well. In his confessions, he pinpoints the epicenter of the human identity as a restless heart in search of rest in God.

He writes this, You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. What Augustine is saying is that every human being is on a quest, whether you know it or not, whether you're conscious of it or not.

We are all on this unconscious journey towards a destination of our deepest dreams. We live leaning forward, bent on arriving at a place that we long for.

Our hearts are like the engine that drives our very existence in this world. It's like a homing beacon, pointing us in the direction of the life that we most desire.

[15 : 31] A vague yet attractive sense of where we think true happiness and true peace and rest will be found. It's a vision of the good life, and it's fed to us through cultural myths and narratives and pictures and stories.

And it's presented to our unconscious, and we just kind of live into those. And we say, these are going to bring us happiness. These are going to bring us joy. And what Augustine is saying when he talks about the restlessness of the human heart, what he means is that since our hearts will only find security, rest, and peace in the one who created us and who truly loves us, which is God, the Father Almighty, we will experience fear, tension, anxiety, and as Augustine says, restlessness, when we try to love things other than God.

So the question I want to ask you tonight is this. Do any of you have troubled hearts?

Maybe there are some here tonight whose hearts are troubled because of sin in their life, because of deep, habitual sins that can't be broken, that you've tried over and over and over again, and yes, you've been saved, and you've been born again, but you just can't break this sin, and it is affecting your intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Maybe that's you tonight. And I truly think that God wants to set you free. Maybe if you can receive prayer afterwards. Maybe there are some here tonight who, sin's not the issue right now, but grief and pain is the issue.

[17 : 21] It's Mother's Day. Maybe you've lost a mother. Maybe you're grieved because your marriage is falling apart, or there's deception and lies in the household.

Maybe there's just a lot of problems that are bringing you grief and anxiety. But maybe none of those are your thing. Maybe you're struggling. Maybe you have a troubled heart right now because of regret and fear and anxiety.

Regret about your past. Maybe you look back at your past and you say, this is way too much. This is way too much. I have done too much stuff. God is never going to forgive me.

I can't tell it to anyone. And you just feel this cloud hanging over your life of shame and regret about your past. Or maybe you're the kind of person who's looking to the future, and you're just saying, I don't know how this is going to work out.

Maybe you lost a job or couldn't get a job. Maybe you're struggling financially right now, and you need God to pull through. Or maybe there's some here tonight whose hearts are troubled just because they're restless.

[18 : 33] They're restless for life and life to the full. The kind of life that Jesus promises us. Maybe you're one of those people. Maybe you've tried every single religion on the market, worshipped every single God, sex, money, power, whatever it is.

And you're just saying, I am still so hungry for meaning. I'm hungry for truth. I'm hungry for life. I need to know the way. Maybe that's you tonight.

And if it's you, I think Jesus wants to speak to you. I think he wants to open his heart to you. And for you to enter in to the incredible love that he offers and the incredible peace that he offers.

So if any of you have a troubled heart tonight, this is where we're going to just wrap things up very briefly. In John 14, Jesus offers us the most remarkable counsel for the most common emotional affliction facing you.

How does Jesus bring peace to a troubled heart? Two things. Two commands. Two exhortations. First, he says, stop letting your hearts be troubled.

[19 : 47] It's a command. These verse 1 and verse 27 are both constructed in the Greek in the imperative. What that means is he's just commanding us, stop letting your hearts be troubled.

And we respond like the disciples in the story. I can't stop. I cannot let go of this fear. I cannot worry about my future. Or I can't regret the past.

I can't let go of this, Lord. Who's going to take care of this if not me? And the Lord is asking, stop letting your heart be troubled. And notice what Jesus does not say in this passage.

Jesus does not tell us, don't let anything bad happen in your life. He doesn't tell us to control our circumstances. What he's saying is that we have a choice to respond to what life throws at us.

And Jesus is not saying this, which is maybe what I hope you're not hearing me say. Jesus is not saying, don't let your hearts be troubled. Try self-help.

[20 : 56] Okay? Jesus is not saying that. Jesus is not telling us to look within ourselves and find inner resources and kind of dig up all the goodness.

And I'm a jolly good guy and I can make life happen for myself. Trust me, I have lived a lot of my Christian life thinking that way. Thinking that that's what God wants me to do. Is just be better.

Dig deeper and find the true you. And go for it, baby. Jesus is not saying that. And Jesus is not saying, don't let your heart be troubled, therefore escape.

Jesus is not saying, go back into that same destructive pattern that you always go to, that you think will bring you rest and peace. He's not saying that.

He's not saying, go play video games when life gets tough or go drink the night away or take drugs or whatever it is that you do. Jesus is not saying that. Here is what Jesus says.

[21 : 53] The most remarkable advice for cure for the troubled heart. The second commandment. Trust me. Can we all say that together? Trust me.

Trust in me. Entrust your life to me. Stop having a troubled heart and entrust the very core and essence of who you are. Whatever it is that's bothering you, take your heart and give it to me.

That's what he's telling us. So I just want to clarify two things about the word trust or belief in your path. Is it belief in the ESV, I believe?

Two things about this. First, that we need to understand. What do we mean when we actually say, I believe in Jesus? I believe in him. I trust in Jesus Christ. And then second, what is the content of our belief?

So the meaning of our belief and the content of our belief. Let's tackle this first one. Belief has two senses or two levels.

[22 : 55] C.S. Lewis talks about this in Mere Christianity. There's one that just simply means I believe or I believe. When we say I believe, it's just basically saying I think certain things are true.

Okay? That particular claims that we make are accurate descriptions of reality. But then there's a different level.

And it's a level of trust. So faith is more than an idea just in your head that I believe a certain set of propositions that describe the way that the world is.

There's an element of trust of the heart. It's more than the head. It's the heart. And Christian faith involves a wholehearted response to the whole being of God.

So friends, you can know a great deal about God. You can recite the creeds. You can say that He's good. That He's a good Father. That He takes care of us and watches over us.

[23 : 57] You can believe that with your head. But in terms of trust, trusting your heart to Him, it takes a different element altogether.

It takes a relational element to say, I want to enter into this relationship with you and I actually want to experience your goodness. I actually want to experience your care and provision over my life.

I want to bring you this sin. I want to bring you this fear. I want to bring you this issue. And I want you, Father, God, to help me with it.

To deliver me from it. To settle this fear and anxiety in your arms and in your love. It's completely different to experience the love of God than to just believe it rationally.

So that's what faith means. Belief means. So what about the content of our belief? In John 14, what Jesus is telling us is that you have to trust in who I am and what I've done and what I'm going to give you.

[25 : 10] Or what I've given you. For us, for the disciples, they had no idea. First, we have to trust in who Jesus is. In verse 10, Jesus says that he is in the Father and the Father is in him.

What a remarkable claim. When I gave that Augustine quote, do you know what I was saying? Is that our hearts are obviously restless until they find rest in the Father. What Jesus is saying, I am the incarnation.

I am the very manifestation of the object of your desire, of the destination of your dreams. I am the life that you seek.

The Son of God adopted human nature and united it with his divine nature in the unity of one person. He is the truest manifestation of the love our hearts long for.

When we entrust our lives to him, when we give him our troubled hearts, he will give it rest. And second, we trust in what Jesus has done or what Jesus did.

[26 : 26] Jesus basically says that I am the way, the truth, and life. Let's remember the context of this passage. Jesus is on his way. It's the upper room discourse. He is on his way to his death to die for the sins of the world.

And what he's saying in this passage, and all the disciples don't know it, that after the death, in three days, I'm going to rise from the dead. And when I rise, I am going to ascend to my Father and I'm going to launch my kingdom and a whole new world of possibilities for human flourishing, for life as we know it.

And I'm going to be reigning and ruling. And then the last thing he says, he says, trust in what I'm going to give you. What I'm going to give you is beyond your wildest imagination.

What I'm going to give you is another counselor, is my spirit, is the spirit of truth. Our passage combines this incredible sense of awe and majesty of Jesus when he talks about, I'm going away to prepare a place for you with my Father.

A place beyond your wildest dreams and imaginations with this sense of intimate presence in 15 through 29. He says, I'm going to give you the gift of my spirit.

[27 : 53] I'm going to be with you in a whole new way. And I'm going to enter into your very heart, your unsettled heart, and begin to make you who you were truly meant to be.

I'm going to give you some of that Zoe, baby, that spiritual life. I'm going to make in you a mansion fit for a king. I'm going to live in you.

One day you're going to rule with me, baby. I'm never going to leave you. Jesus, this is it. We're done. Jesus is inviting us to trust him completely.

To give him our unsettled hearts, not just to believe in our head, but believe right here. He is the one our hearts long for. He is the one who can deliver us from all the things that prevent us from living life to the full.

He can forgive you of all your past sins and wipe away your shame because he's done it on the cross. Your heart will only find true rest in the loving arms of the Father who loved you before the creation of the world and created you.

[29 : 08] And Jesus, this passage is abundantly clear, Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. He's the only way. There's no other way.

No moral effort. No other God. Nothing. He is the only way. And he can completely turn your life around. Believe in him. The only cure to your troubled heart.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.