

John 13:36-14:8

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[0 : 0 0] Let us pray. Lord, I pray that you would open my mouth and open our ears, that we would all know better who you are today. In your name I pray. Amen. You may all be seated. Good morning. As Ben said, I'm Aberdeen and I'm the artisan apprentice here at St. John's and it's so good to be with you this morning.

Well, I was thinking about this sermon series title, Formed by Jesus, and I was thinking, okay, how does this passage fit that? And then I got to the first verse of chapter 14 and I thought, easy, it's pretty obvious. Do not let your hearts be troubled. That's how we're supposed to be formed.

And then I thought about it for a second longer and I thought, oh, that's actually the opposite of easy. How on earth can Jesus ask that of us? I mean, imagine the scene, the original scene in which Jesus is saying this. This is the Last Supper. It's the Passover meal.

Jesus and his disciples are together and right outside the doors, the Pharisees are scheming to kill him. And Jesus has just told the disciples that someone in their midst is going to betray him.

He's told them that he's going to leave them and they can't follow. And now at the beginning of our passage, he tells them that Peter, the rock, the one that they all thought they could depend on, he's going to deny Jesus that very night, three times.

[1 : 2 6] The disciples have really good reason to be troubled. And I wonder if we can relate in any way today. What is the thing this morning that you've always thought you could rely on that now suddenly seems shaky?

Maybe you've always felt like you can trust your body to do what it's supposed to do and now that has changed. Or maybe you look at the world and things you always took for granted in society that feel safe and good seem to be falling apart before your eyes.

Or maybe you're reaching a point in your life where you should be hitting these milestones of adulthood and yet you look forward and you don't know where you're going. There are so many things to be reasonably troubled by.

And into this chorus of concerns, we hear the voice of Jesus the night before his death saying, Do not be troubled. And it seems like a crazy thing to say.

How can he ask that of us? And yet, as we look deeper in this passage, we see that Jesus reveals things about himself that can give us hope.

[2 : 3 3] It's Jesus' identity that gives us the reason to not be troubled. And there are two specific parts of Jesus' identity that I want to look at in this passage today.

But first, I want to just look at the context into which he's revealing his identity. Because Jesus is explaining who he is in answer to the disciples' questions. And you'll notice they ask a lot of questions in this passage.

They ask all the questions, in fact, except the right one. Right before this passage, Jesus has told them that he's giving them a new commandment. To love as he has loved them.

And Peter, in verse 36, skips right over that. And he goes back to what Jesus said about leaving them and that they can't follow. And he says, Lord, where are you going?

Jesus tries to refocus him on what really matters. But Peter still doesn't get it in verse 38. He says, but why can't I follow you now? Jesus has to explain that it's not about Peter's faithfulness.

[3 : 31] Peter doesn't still seem to get it. And then in 14, verse 5, it's Thomas' turn. Jesus has just told them that he's going to go away. And he's going to come back and take them to be with him.

And Thomas says, but how can we know the way to where you're going? And see what all these questions have in common. The disciples want to know details. The practical specifics.

The hows and the when and the where. Lord, where are you going? Why can't I follow you now? How can we know the way? They want a blueprint for what's going to happen.

And I get it. I think we carry very similar questions. I know I do. God, what are you doing in my life? How are you going to fix this issue? But Jesus keeps pushing the disciples and us back to a different question.

Who? Who are we trusting in? Who is Jesus? Right after he commands them to not be troubled in verse 1, he says, Believe in God.

[4 : 34] Believe also in me. And this is why the question of his identity is so important. Because the disciples are sitting right in front of Jesus. And yet it's clear from their questions that they don't understand who he is still.

And until they do, until they really ask, who is Jesus? Their hearts will be troubled. And Jesus is so gracious and patient because he keeps revealing himself to them, even through their off-track questions.

And that's what I want to look at now. How does Jesus answer the question of who he is? So the first part of this question, the first answer of what is his identity, is in the verses right after he tells them, don't let your hearts be troubled.

Look at verses 2 and 3 of chapter 14. Jesus says he's going away to prepare a place in his father's house for his disciples. And then he's going to come back and take them there. This is who Jesus is.

He is the one who will take us to be with the father. Some context about all the various things that he's saying here, because a lot of it is contextual to Jewish practice. So the father's house is a Jewish way of talking about heaven.

[5 : 44] It's the place after death. And when Jesus says, I will come again, in verse 3, he's referring to his second coming and glory. When he will finally judge evil once and for all and establish his kingdom and wipe away every tear.

And this idea of going away and preparing a place is drawing on ancient Israelite wedding customs. So when a couple was going to get married, they would enter a betrothal period. And this betrothal was just as binding as marriage.

You had to get a divorce to break a betrothal. The only difference between being betrothed and being married was that you weren't physically living with your spouse during the betrothal period.

The groom would go away and he would prepare a literal place for him and his bride to live in. And then he would come back when it was ready and take his bride and they would be officially married and they would live together.

So in using this image, Jesus is saying he is committed to his disciples and to all his followers, including us. He loves them and he wants to be with them.

[6 : 46] And there is no doubt that he is coming back for them so that they can be in the presence of God forever. Now, obviously, he's not building a physical place for them.

He's not making beds or putting in drywall. The idea of preparation here is rather about the cost of what it takes for us to be with God. And it costs Jesus his life.

Remember, he's saying this on the night before his crucifixion. His death and his resurrection are the preparation. They are what make his glorious second coming possible.

Now, the disciples don't get all of this yet, although they will. But right now, their hope is that this is not a final goodbye. That even though Jesus is leaving them, he will come back for them.

And that no matter what dark days are ahead of them, and there are dark days ahead of them, it ends well. Because Jesus' identity is the one who comes back for those he loves to live with them forever.

[7 : 48] And so our hearts do not have to be troubled because we know who Jesus is. He's the one who will come back for us. It means we know the end of the story, and we know that it's good.

But we're also not left alone until that future day. There's also a present hope in this passage. And this is the second part of Jesus' identity that he reveals here. We don't have to be troubled because right now, Jesus is the way to God.

Maybe you've been waiting for us to get here, to the most famous part of this passage, one of Jesus' I Am statements. This is the second to last one that we're going to get to in the book of John. And we're there.

So everyone look at verse 6. Jesus says, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. And notice that this is all present tense.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus is not only the one who will bring us to the Father in the future.

[8 : 54] He is the way to the Father now. And it's a way full of life and truth. The way to the Father is not some unknown, scary thing that we have to figure out ourselves.

It's full of light and truth, and it's a way that we can trust. Because the conflict in the whole biblical story until this point has been the distance between humanity and God.

And this distance is our deepest need. That we cannot cross this chasm on our own. We're made for God, and yet we cannot be near Him because of our sin. And I think, like the disciples, we can get so wrapped up in our legitimate practical concerns that we forget that underlying all of that is this gap between us and God that we cannot cross.

And so Jesus' words here give us hope. Because He has fixed our deepest problem. He has gotten rid of everything that keeps us from God's presence.

Our sin, death, and the devil. He isn't just preparing the way to God. He is the way. And this is a big claim, right?

[9 : 57] How can He say this? He can be the way to God because He and the Father are one. Go back to verse 1. Right after He says, do not let your hearts be troubled.

He says, believe in God. Believe also in Me. He's asking for the same kind of faith in Himself that people have in God the Father. Which is a pretty strong claim that He and the Father are one.

At the end of our passage, same thing. Verse 7. He says, if you had known Me, you would have known the Father. To know Jesus is to know the Father. And so even though we're not physically with God yet, we don't have to wait for heaven to experience the presence of God.

We don't have to wonder any longer if we can be forgiven. Because right now, in our present moment, Jesus is the way. So how can we possibly not be troubled this morning?

It seems like a crazy ask given everything that's going on in our lives and in the world. But Jesus' identity gives us hope. It's a future hope and it's a present hope.

[11 : 06] And as we think about what that means for our lives, I think it helps to remember this picture of a betrothal. We are all the bride of Christ. And we're in that betrothal period.

So there's this eternal binding covenant and yet we're not physically present with Christ yet. But we can know for sure that our groom is coming. Because our groom is none other than God Himself.

And we can know that right now, in this present moment, we are chosen and we are beloved. And I wonder how it would change how we approach our fears to act like a bride who knows that her groom is coming back for her.

A groom who has already defeated death in order to make a way to be with her. Friends, we are ones whom Jesus loves.

That is our identity. So let not our hearts be troubled. Amen. Amen.