
LIFE IN HIS NAME

HEALING FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

John 14:1-4

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.

This passage begins with these words: “Let not your hearts be troubled.” The apostles are troubled. They are confused. They are anxious. They do not completely understand what Jesus has been telling them. Jesus has been telling them something that sounds a lot like he’s going to die. He is speaking about his glorification. He is speaking about his hour that has come. There has been this talk about someone who is going to betray Jesus. Peter has been told that before the night is over he will deny Jesus.

They don’t all have the exact same amount of information, but they all have enough information and they all understand enough to know it’s very ominous. Things are not good. They see Jesus troubled, which must have been extremely unsettling. They are hearing these predictions and they, themselves, are deeply troubled.

I think about Peter. We sometimes give Peter a hard time for some of the things that he says that seem inappropriate in the moment, where he kind of boldly puts it out there. Yet thank God for Peter, right? Because we would all be wondering what Peter is often wondering, but he has the courage to speak it. I think about this man who left everything to follow Jesus.

I don’t know if you remember or you know the account where the rich young man comes to Jesus, asking Jesus about eternal life. Jesus begins to interact with the man and it leads to this whole teaching. Before it’s over, Jesus, loving this rich young ruler, sees that his love for money will keep him from true love, from experiencing and knowing the love of God and what God wants to do in his life. So he tells the man: “Go sell everything you have. Give it to the poor and the kingdom of heaven will be yours,” trying in love to set the man free from a blinding love that will destroy his life.

So in that moment, as they are talking about how riches can be an obstacle, Peter just jumps in. Do you remember what he said? “Lord, we have left everything to follow you!” Jesus reassures Peter in that moment. But you know what? If I were Peter, and I’m hearing this message, I would have been thinking about that. “Wait just a minute. You’re telling me I’m going to deny you. Have I not proven my loyalty? I’ve left everything! Everything materially, relationally, the

business...” I would have been anxious, troubled. Jesus meets his disciples in this moment to bring healing, to bring comfort in the midst of their distress.

Now, remember the theme of the book of John. In John 20:30-31 we are given that theme. John writes all of these things to us so that we might have life in the name of Jesus. Everyone who believes in Christ, everyone who believes in his name will experience life. John has been telling us over and over in various ways, using various metaphors, quoting Jesus over and over again that there is life in the name of Jesus. Jesus is the Living Water. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Door. Jesus is the Good Shepherd -- on and on, teaching in various ways that there is life in the name of Jesus.

Now, that grand truth of who Jesus is, what he does in our lives, is applied to this very specific area: when our hearts are anxious, when we are fearful, when we are in distress. You could apply it, really, in a number of ways. You could say that when we face tremendous loss, when we face death for someone we love or for ourselves, when we are fearful because we are confused or bad things are happening, or bad things are feared to happen – in all of those categories the comfort that we find in this passage meets us and Jesus brings healing, restoration, and comfort to our hearts. It’s very powerful, very relevant, where this grand truth of who Jesus is, as the life-giving One, meets us in the place of our greatest distress.

Let me just say this as we begin our study. You might be one of those people who wake up in the middle of the night and all of a sudden begin to experience distress or anxiety. You wake up and are worried about this person, you are worried about your health, you are worried about money, you are worried about this -- whatever it is (there are times where I confess that troubles find me in the middle of the night). I just encourage you: God’s word brings freedom. God’s word brings healing. God’s word brings comfort. Don’t get up and turn on your computer. Don’t watch a show. Get up and pray. Get up and seek the Lord. Get up and open the scripture and let God meet you in his word.

So this morning, from these four verses, I’m going to give you five ways in which Jesus restores a troubled heart.

I. He speaks words of comfort.

The passage begins: “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Jesus speaks directly, personally, relationally, words of consolation. He often meets us in his written word -- in the psalms, and in various phrases and words and verses spoken directly to us or indirectly spoken to us as they were originally spoken to someone else, but are now recorded in the scripture.

Here’s what we will find out. If you can see this general principle, it will help you so much in every sphere of life. Jesus is the life and that life is brought to you at his cross. That’s the central message of the New Testament. There is life in the name of Jesus, and you experience that when you trust in him and his sacrifice for you. You are freed from sin, the bondage of sin, the penalty of sin, the death that sin brings to us. That central message is life-giving as you embrace it.

This is very helpful. This is the principle I want to get to. We sometimes think of that generally, like God's just going to – boom! – drop life right on top of us, right in our lap. And he does that, but frequently he takes that message and he applies it. He applies it to what it means to be single, to what it means to be divorced, to what it means to be married, to what it means to be a parent, to what it means about work, to what it means about life purpose, to what it means about depression, and discouragement, and fear, and anxiety, and the message that there's life in the name of Jesus, brought to us through his supreme sacrifice. His death for you is then applied in all of these various categories. Learning to follow Jesus in all of these experiences and events and spheres has to do with learning to take this central message and to see how it fits in the season of life that you are in.

So we begin by saying: Don't wish your life away. Don't sit there in this moment where you find yourself in a season of life where you are just ready for the next season. "I'm ready to get on with it!" Like, "Will I ever graduate?" Don't wish that season away. Those of us who have graduated will tell you it doesn't get a lot better after graduation! That's not entirely true, but enjoy the season. Every season brings unique challenges and unique blessings. And it is true that if we cannot learn to enjoy God in this given season, it's unlikely that we will enjoy him in the next until we settle out these principles. Right? Amen?

Now, I'm suggesting to you that Jesus Christ and the message of the cross is the key to that. Here we have a very specific application, and that is the application of a troubled heart. So the first thing that the Lord does is speak words of comfort. I think of Matthew 11:28-30, where Jesus said, "Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Or Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That's a very specific promise, where God is challenging an individual, challenging his disciples: "Give yourselves to the kingdom. Give yourselves to taking your material possessions, and don't let those own you. Don't let those have you or your heart. Instead, use those to seek the kingdom."

Listen, the reality is that you may experience this, but when you start to do that you may say "Argh, what am I doing? What have I done? Oh, I just put this check in the offering box. Can I get my hand in there? Maybe I need to rethink this." Giver's remorse.

Well, God gives specific promises to say, "Listen, don't fear! The Father delights in giving you the kingdom. He wants to do a work of spiritual renovation in your heart. He will not fail you." And over and over the Lord meets us with these words of comfort.

Let me just say this. The obvious application when we are troubled is to allow God to meet us in the power of his word with the comfort of his word by his Holy Spirit. Take the bible. Take the authors that help you receive God's word and to

receive comfort. For me, Charles Spurgeon is one of those. I go to a little resource called Beside Still Waters. It has been so wonderfully comforting for me. I will just open it, read a verse, read the devotions that are there, and God meets me in a marvelous way.

But there is a second application here, friends. It's an application where we want to be intentional about speaking the word of God to other people when they are in need of consolation. This week my wife and I and a few others in the congregation were at a funeral service for a young man, 24 years of age, who lost his life the previous week. Tragic. I knew some of the family members of this young man and some of my family members were very close to those family members. It was devastating. It was so tragic that this young life was taken, and people just don't know what to say. They don't know what to say in these situations. Sometimes we are very awkward. We are terribly awkward. We even say very foolish things, condescending things that are not true.

If you are like me, I don't always know what to say and I am frequently in the position of needing to be able to say something that will help. Go to God's word. Learn to open God's word and just let the scripture speak in people's lives.

#1 – God meets us. He speaks words of comfort to us.

II. He calls us to trust.

“Believe in God; believe also in me.” These are the words of Jesus. He is coaxing us to a place of faith. He is invoking faith. The word for faith is “pisteuo.” It literally means “to believe.” It speaks of a relational trust, to place your trust in Jesus.

In some ways, this is the grand application here, but I don't want you to get the impression that it's the only application, because as we move through these, I think they are going to increase in terms of their practical help in your life. But it helps you on the front end to know this: God meets you most often through his word and by his Spirit, and he begins to comfort you and to call you to a place of faith, to trust in him. Lay down your anxiety. Lay down your fear. Lay down that kind of life-controlling, defining emotion or affection. Lay it down and say, “I'm going to trust in you.”

I think of my own experience and I apologize for illustrating it personally, but it's the easiest way I know how. In every season of life unique things meet you. I was an old man when I got married. I was 26 years old. I met my wife at 23. She was young and beautiful; now she's young and beautiful. There I was, 23 years of age, at the world's largest seminary. 7000 students, and 6,999 were men, and not available wives. I have to be honest. I said, “You know, this is not really working out. I should have thought this through better. I should have brought a wife with me to seminary.” Of course, I tried, but was waiting for the perfect one.

My point is this. Honestly, there were moments where it seems silly now, but “Am I going to meet the right person? God, this is essential from my perspective. I hope it’s essential from your perspective.” I know that God gives grace to people to be single, and to be single for life, but I think you get the point.

I speak to married people who are in distress and unhappy in their marriage, and it creates this anxiety of like: “Oh no – is this my life? Is this the way it’s always going to be?” God replaces all of that with this call to trust in him. Okay? That’s the big picture.

III. He gives specific promises.

I have alluded to this before as a general principle that gives us help. Let’s see if we can see how it’s applied in this passage and maybe in a few other places. Jesus comes in and says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again. I will take you to myself and where I am, you may be also.” All of those are specific promises that Jesus is giving that speak to the troubled heart. “In my Father’s house are many rooms. I go to prepare a place. I will come again. I will take you to myself. Where I am you will be also.” Jesus is offering comfort now with specific promises that speak to the condition of the troubled heart.

The word for house is the word “oikos,” but the word for rooms is the word “monay.” It’s translated “mansion” in the old King James. It’s translated “dwelling place.” Probably the best translation is the word “place.” It can be translated “home” as it is in John 14:23. I gave you that little vocabulary lesson because the way Jesus is communicating to us is intended to settle our hearts. I’m not at peace. I’m in turmoil. I’m in distress. And Jesus is saying to you, “Listen, I have a place for you.”

As I was meditating on this passage I thought about my childhood home, where at eight or ten years of age we lived in the Washington, D.C. area. My Dad pastored a little church on a hill and the parsonage was right next to it. My room was not intended to be a bedroom, but it was this room over the front porch with no heating. It had a long window, and if you swung the window open, you could see the little church on the hill with a cemetery on the other side. I guess I should have been afraid of the cemetery, but I wasn’t because we played in the cemetery. That was like our playground. I would look out that window, and I remember that on really cold nights I would take my grandmother’s quilts and pile them up onto the bed and I used to love to get under all the weight of the quilts when it was cold. I say that because when I think of the place from my childhood that brought me comfort, I think of that room, that little room that was my space.

Maybe you have images where you can remember places where you felt secure and safe. My big brother was right in the next room, though he was sometimes mean to me. Jesus has a place for you. He is speaking to us promises when we are tempted to feel alone, disenfranchised, without a place, without a home, without security, all alone, and he is saying, “No,

no, no, no, no. I have a place and I'm there. I'm going to go and I'm going to get you. I'm going to bring you." He is speaking specific promises to the specific need.

Now, this principle has helped me a lot in life. Why? Well, when my wife and I got married and I started experiencing new responsibility and a new role as a husband, I didn't know how to be a husband. I really was not aware of many of the selfish tendencies that were in my life. In all honesty, I would have to say I still fight today the pride and the selfishness and sinfulness. It's a battle for us in life, and I was certainly no exception. Maybe I was a star example in that particular category. Shake your head like this, dear. Say, "No, no."

Here's what I want you to see. When I would go to passages like Ephesians 5:21-31, where we are told about marriage and about husband and wife relationships, I could see certain commands there, but it took a little bit of time to see that God meets me with his promises here. He gives me instruction that I am to nurture my wife, I am to cherish, I am to love my wife. That means that my goal is that she is to have this overwhelming sense in her own heart, "in my husband's eyes, in this world I am treasured above other treasures." As for God, he treasures me. He cherishes me and he gives himself towards my nurture.

Now, here I am in my own sin and selfishness getting married, thinking, "Wow, how is she going to make me happy today?" That's not a great combination for "lay down your life to cherish this person." So, God began to show me these principles in scripture. I had taught them, but I had never applied them or the promises in my marriage.

There is this wonderful principle that was defining for me in that season: God gives grace to the humble, but he resists the proud. I just began to say, "Okay, Lord. In my humble opinion, in our marriage, which is not in a great state -- I don't know the future of it -- I'm hoping you'll bring some significant changes to my wife." She's in need, Lord. I don't know if you've noticed.

It was such a transition for me to say, "Okay, Lord, I'm a mess. Help me!" Every time I was tempted to come back and say, "Lord, did you hear that? Did you see that?" the Lord was saying, "Listen, you have this fear that if you just work on you, then she will be a mess. Well, I've got news for you, Brian, you're the bigger mess and you can't do this without me. Not only will I help you if you just humble yourself, but if you don't, I will resist you. And you think she's hard when she resists you, you wait till I resist you."

It's a defining principle, right? So then I get over into Ephesians 5, and you know what's there in Ephesians 5? Jesus has washed me with his word. Jesus has cleansed me. Jesus has conquered my sin. I am actually to love her the way he loves me! So now when I go back over here and I confront my selfishness, and I'm trying to step out, and I'm trying to do it, as soon as I start I'm wanting some grand applause and recognition. It's like, "Wow, I'm a bigger mess than I thought I was."

What do I do? God, help me! You say you'll give grace to the humble. I'm humbling myself. Help me." You know what he does? He helps you. He does.

What I'm trying to illustrate with this very long illustration (and if you don't get it, it's going to get longer) is this: It's wonderful to say, "Okay, I want a Christ-centered marriage," but it's not like this truckload of marital bliss is going to drop on you from heaven. Like I'm going to go around with a bible and just – bam -- slap you on the head. "Whoo, I'm happily married!" No, there's content here, and with that content there is specific instruction. The instruction for me there in that passage is different than what it is for Beth. And with it is this powerful promise where my love for her is really connected to what I'm receiving from God.

Now, it's the power of the specific promise that begins to transform us in these various spheres. And today's message, though it may not sound like it in this moment, is not about marriage, though if God helps you in your marriage, that's wonderful. It's just a bonus. It's about anxiety. It's about fear. It's about a heart in turmoil.

I know that there are individuals here who are experiencing that in significant ways. Some of you would say, "This is defining my life. So I want you to see that there are specific promises that will meet you. Get into God's word. Mine his word for those promises, because they will be transformative in your life. Amen?"

So, really quickly, #4.

IV. He reasons with us.

This is the point in the message where I think the passage really can unfold for us. In verse 2, Jesus says, "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?" Jesus begins to apply some sanctified logic. He says to them in essence, "I have told you already that I go to prepare a place for you." If you start to think about that, you are thinking, "Wow, I'm not exactly sure where that happens." If you stop and you think about it, you say, "What are you saying? It's not ready?"

In other places of the gospels, we are told that that place has been prepared before the foundations of the earth. I don't know how to say this, except to say that heaven is not a fixer upper. It's not in disrepair. Surely the message is not, "Well, I've got to go clean your room and reshape it or repair it." Jesus is talking about something specific. I think the reference when he says, "Would I have told you this," just goes back to the previous section of scripture at the end of Chapter 13. Look at verse 33: "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.'"

Do you remember we looked at that verse last week? Back in Chapter 7 or 8, Jesus had said to the Jews: “I’m going to a place and you can’t come,” and that was a rebuke to them. But for the apostles, he was speaking of the cross and wanting them to understand that there was going to be a moment where they were completely separated from Jesus, but it was for their own good. John 13:36: “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.”

Okay, here’s what this means. Here is what I believe Jesus is saying. The physical place is not unready, but you can’t go there because of your sin. You have no access because you are separated from the Father. I am going to the cross. I am going to give my life for your sin because I am preparing a place for you. I am giving you access into that place which is yours.

The significance of that is almost veiled in the way Jesus communicates it. If you look deeply, it’s clearly there and it’s the right interpretation. But, what it tells you is they don’t understand that. They don’t really grasp that the cross is just hours away. They will not understand their need for cleansing that will only come from the cross until after the cross. So Jesus uses this language that speaks of a house, speaks of a dwelling place, speaks of a mansion, though that’s not literally what Jesus is after, which tells you something wonderful about the way God addresses us -- how he accommodates his language to our need in the moment in order to bring us comfort and strength. Isn’t that exciting? It’s wonderful, good news.

He reasons with us. There is a logic to faith. If you take these points and you start to put them together, he speaks uniquely to comfort me, he invites me to faith, he speaks specific promises to me, he reasons with me. Do you see that there is kind of a wisdom that envelops us in God? A way of thinking that elicits trust.

I would put it this way in this particular context. Jesus is saying, “Listen, do you think that I’m going to offer myself so that you can be forgiven of your sin? That I’m going to remove the guilt of your sin and its punishment and its payment and its shame so that I can leave you and forget you? Do you think that I’m going to go through this cost and this sacrifice so that I won’t return for you, that I won’t take you with me, or that I’ll leave you abandoned in this moment? Be comforted and know that the cross defines your life, that my life defines your life because of the sacrifice that I make for you.” And if you can learn to think gospel thoughts, it will inform every aspect of your life, and you can begin to experience the joy of what it really means to live a Christ-centered life, bringing us to the fifth and final point.

V. He strengthens us with his very presence.

Verse 4: “And you know the way to where I am going.” This will be our next message, God willing. We will look at the glorious truth where Jesus proclaims: “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” and this verse begins to set up that

discussion. Allow me to say in this moment that what Jesus is referring to is that Jesus does more than show us the way. He does more than give us an example. He is the way. And they know the way because they know Jesus.

There is an encouragement here to put our hope in Christ himself. I am suggesting to you that the application and the inference here is that the words that Jesus speak to us bring his very presence, communicate his presence in our lives, even though the Lord is with us, he is present everywhere. When we come together in the word of God, even as Adam was reading from the scripture this morning, there were moments where I became more aware of the presence of the Lord with us as we sang certain songs. Thank God for the music. Thank God for talented musicians who lead us, right? That moves us emotionally, which is wonderful, and it's a gift from the Lord. But it's the word of God coming to us, opening our hearts, bringing life, and making us aware of his presence when we really begin to experience his life.

I want to conclude by just telling you about an experience of one of our young ladies here in the church. She gave me permission to share a little bit of her story. She was diagnosed a year ago with a condition, a sickness called lupus. We have been praying for her this last year and she did something unique. I thought it was wonderful. On the anniversary of that, she called just a few people together in her life, a few of the ladies in her life. It wasn't intended to be comprehensive, but just a few, to celebrate. That seems odd to us, doesn't it? I'm going to take the anniversary of some very bad news, and I'm going to take that day and I'm going to use it as a day of celebration. But when I talked to her about it, she told me about how she went in and saw the medical professionals who had been taking care of her, how she thanked them, and how she began to tell them how God had met her in this year.

With these individuals that came together for a time of giving thanks, her testimony was very simple. "I have experienced Christ. Jesus has been faithful to me in this last year." It's a wonderful testimony. The second I heard about her diagnosis I began to pray, and pray to this day for her healing, for her wholeness, for God to give her physical health. I know that that's what she prays for. I know that that's what her family prays for. But to understand that my happiness transcends this condition because Jesus is the way and Jesus is here and Jesus is with me -- it's wonderful!

If that scares you, it shouldn't scare you. Jesus is bigger than the object of your fear, and if he is here, he is the way. Some of you are seasoned in the Lord. You have experienced this truth in dramatic ways. You would have never chosen the path that you ended up on in the providence of God, but God was there, and he strengthens you with his very presence.

I want to close us out by encouraging you in this particular area with a final application, okay? If you are battling turmoil in your own heart, it could be in many categories. It could be discouragement, depression, fear, anxiety, unrest, just all across the board. I want to tell you that you have to fight. You have to spiritually resist fear and anxiety. You may feel powerless to do it, but the strength will come in the word of God.

I have been trying throughout this entire message to illustrate to you, not just in some superstitious way like, “I read the word of God and – poof! – bad emotions go.” No, I learn to connect the truth of God and the promises of God by the Spirit of God to my situation, all centered on Christ, all centered in the cross.

I believe that there are individuals here today where God is calling you to a place of faith, to a place of strength, to awaken your heart toward the Lord, to battle that which is opposing you.

Let’s pray.