

Truths for Troubled Hearts

John 14:1-14

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Today we're in between series. We've just ended our look at Daniel. And in two weeks we'll begin looking at the Gospel of Matthew. Today I want to address our difficulty we've felt as a church. Twenty-twenty has been a hard year for us. We're isolated. Loved ones have died. Jobs are lost. Relationships are broken. Our church is facing a lot of difficulty. And we're not sure when or if it's going to end. How do we respond? This morning, we'll continue building on themes Dominick touched on last week. And to help us see God's call for his people in difficulty, we're going to be in John 14:1-14.

So let's begin with the setting of John 14. There, the current situation is reflected in what the disciples are facing. The disciples are facing pain. The pain we see is with discipleship failure. In John 13, Jesus predicts the pain of Judas' failure. He just left the Last Supper. Judas will lead the religious leaders to arrest Jesus. And he will betray Jesus. We'll see Judas' failure. Jesus also predicts Peter's failure in John 13. Bold Peter will deny Jesus. Not just once. But Peter will fail three times. We'll see Peter's failure. The disciples are also facing Jesus' absence. In John 13, Jesus said he's departing. Jesus is going. Jesus is leaving. And they can't follow him. There's the pain of Jesus' departure. In their pain, how do they respond to Jesus' absence? In the difficulty, how should they consider Jesus' departure?

Their pain and Jesus' absence is parallel with our own lives. Like the disciples, we live in pain. We experience loss, fear, and confusion. And we wrestle with Jesus' lack of presence. We wonder where Jesus is.

An example of our pain is that we've lost loved ones. And we feel the pain of their loss. Their bed is made. But their bed is empty. Their clothes smell of them. But no one wears them. The things they loved surround us. But no one uses them. We call their phone to hear their voice. But no one answers. We go to their house thinking we'll see them. But no one's home. With COVID-19, some of us couldn't even say goodbye.

Loss isn't the only difficulty we experience. There are countless other difficulties. There's unemployment in a devastated economy. There's the loneliness each of us feel. There's our own depression and anxiety. And to add to the pain, Jesus isn't present. We can't see him, hear from him, or gain his perspective. Jesus isn't with us. In our pain, how do we respond to Jesus' absence?

The big idea for John 14 is that in our pain, we should trust Jesus and see his presence with us. We're going to see three quick commands and three truths of Jesus' presence.

So let's read our passage. There Jesus says:

John 14:1-14¹

¹Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In 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? ³And 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. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going."

¹Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version[®] unless otherwise noted.

⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹Jesus 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’? ¹⁰Do 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. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

¹²“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. ¹³Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

This is the Word of the Lord.

JESUS’ THREE COMMANDS FOR THEIR DIFFICULTY AND HIS ABSENCE (1)

First Command: Let not your hearts be troubled.

With coming pain, with coming loss, and with Jesus’ departure; the disciples will be discouraged. They’ll feel devastated. But Jesus speaks to their pain. And Jesus speaks to his absence. We’ll see in John 14 Jesus’ three commands for their difficulty and his absence. The first command is found in verse 1: “Let not your hearts be troubled.”

But how can they be at peace? How can they be calm? Remember the next couple days? The disciples will be devastated. Jesus will be arrested. He will be mocked. He will be beaten. He will be put on trial. And he will be crucified, die, and be buried. The King will be dead! The disciples have a great reason to be concerned and confused.

Second and Third Commands: Believe in God; believe also in me.

So what does Jesus say to their fears? How can they find peace? The way for peace is found in the other two commands in verse 1: “Believe in God; believe also in me.” Jesus says he’s on a level playing field with the Father. Jesus says he’s on par with the Father. And Jesus says in your pain trust the Father and trust me. When difficulty comes, cling to the Father and cling to me. When I’m gone, rest in the Father and rest in me. When I’m not with you, believe in the Father and believe in me. Jesus puts his strength on par with the Father and says trust me.

In thinking of the need to trust Jesus in our pain, and the need to trust Jesus in his absence, it reminds me of walking on ice as a kid. I grew up near a small pond. And many winters the pond would freeze over. It’d be a solid sheet of ice. So we’d test its strength. And we’d slide slowly across the frozen pond. If we heard the crack, the breaking sound, we’d book it off the ice. But one time I wasn’t so quick. I hit a weak spot. I wasn’t paying attention. And the ice broke. My foot went through. And I went home with a soaked shoe and a numb foot. So that day I learned a critical lesson. If you walk on ice, stand where there’s strength. Stand where it’s solid. Don’t walk on thin ice.

It's the same for your faith. It's the same for what you trust. Stand where there's strength. Place your faith where it's solid. Jesus puts his strength on par with the Father. Jesus tells us that in our difficulty, we should trust in the Father and the Son.

JESUS WILL BE WITH US IN ETERNAL LIFE. (2-7)

So when we see our pain, and we see Jesus' absence, is the answer just to trust Jesus? Is believing in Jesus all there is to it? In these verses, Jesus tells us of his presence. He tells us how he is with us and why we should trust him in difficulty. Our first truth is: Jesus will be with us in eternal life.

So in difficulty, Jesus gives hope. In loss, there's eternal life. And in his absence, there's his future presence. One day, Jesus will always be with those who believe. Let's see Jesus describe his future presence. In verse 3, Jesus says he'll prepare a place for you. When Jesus leaves, he's getting eternal life ready. He's putting the finishing touches on heaven. He's pulling out all the stops to get our hope ready. Eternal life is going to be dressed to the nines for those who believe. In verse 2, eternal life is described as a house with many rooms. We'll be with Jesus in a killer mansion. It'll be massive. There's room after room after room. There's space for all who believe in Jesus. In verse 3, Jesus says, "I will come again and will take you to myself." When Jesus returns, all of his followers will join him in heaven. He's not gone forever. Things aren't over. When Jesus returns, he'll bring us to join him in eternal life. Believers, eternal life speaks to our pain. We can anticipate his future presence.

But who goes to eternal life? Who gets access to Jesus' future presence? This hope is exclusively found in Jesus. In verse 6, Jesus says he's "the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus is the way because he gives access to eternal life. He's how we go to eternal life. Jesus is the truth God reveals. He's the way to eternal life, because he's God's revelation of truth. Jesus is the life God gives believers. Jesus gives his life so we can have the way to eternal life. The way, truth, and life are all about Jesus giving access to eternal life. Jesus builds on how he alone gives access to eternal life. In verse 6, Jesus says, "No one comes to the Father except through me." Access to eternal life can't be found in our efforts. It's not found in going to church, reading your Bible, following the rules, or being a good person. Access to eternal life can't be found in other religions. It can't be found in Islam, Mormonism, or Buddhism. There aren't many paths to heaven. Eternal life is found in Jesus alone. It's Jesus alone we must trust. Jesus alone gives access to his future presence.

So eternal life provides Jesus' presence. In eternal life, Jesus is with us. But how does eternal life address the pain? How does Jesus' eternal presence speak to our trouble? It's because hope impacts difficulty. To illustrate how hope impacts difficulty, imagine a scenario. You're sitting down. It's breakfast. You're eating Cheerios. Suddenly the phone rings. It's an unknown number. But the election is over. It's not a politician. So you answer, "Hello?". The voice on the other line says, "Hello. This is Bank of America. We regret to tell you. It's your uncle Billy. He has died." You respond, "Who? Uncle Billy?" The bank informs you that uncle Billy is Bill Gates. And Bill Gates has left you five billion dollars. What happens next? You drop your brand new iPhone 12. It lands in your Cheerio bowl. Your phone is fried. Does this difficulty affect you? No! You've got an inheritance coming. You could literally buy a million iPhones. And you'd still have money left over. Hope impacts difficulty. On the way to the bank, your tire goes flat on your 2005 Honda Civic. You're stranded next to your car. Does this difficulty affect you? No! You're busy contemplating which Lamborghini you'll want to buy. You could face tremendous difficulty and be unphased. You could even break a bone and not stop smiling! Hope impacts difficulty.

And Jesus' eternal presence should impact us. But how? How should eternal life impact our trouble? Let me encourage you to think of eternal life. Reflect on our eternal presence with Jesus. Contemplate what's to come. We could apply this need to those in their final years of life. Or to those struggling financially. But an example I'd like to unpack is for the stay-at-home parent. Stay-at-home parents, in your difficulty think of heaven. As a stay-at-home parent, you'll face the enemy. Satan will remind you of COVID-19's hardships. Eight months have been wasted. There's no childcare. You can't see your friends. Schools are shutting down. Church is shutting down. You shouldn't be a home-schooling parent. Satan whispers to your heart: You're a failure. Your life is a waste. You're all alone. No one cares. But church, these are lies. Lies. Lies from the enemy. And the stay-at-home parent needs to think of Jesus' eternal presence. In our COVID-19 world, we have ample opportunity to share the gospel with our kids. Opportunity abounds to impact their eternal life. We have limitless time to help our kids see life with Bible-shaped lenses. We can prepare them to make an eternal impact on others. Reflect on how in eternity, God will reward diapers changed, dishes washed, and meals cooked for his glory. Your time is not a waste. And one day in heaven, Satan will no longer tell you lies. Sin will be gone. Creation will be restored. No more COVID-19. Stay-at-home parents, think of Jesus' eternal presence. Let our hope press you on in difficulty.

JESUS WITH US MEANS THE FATHER IS WITH US. (8-11)

So the first truth of Jesus' presence is that he'll be with us in eternal life. What's the second truth of Jesus' presence? The second truth of Jesus' presence is: Jesus with us means the Father is with us.

In John 14, Jesus' eternal presence isn't enough for Philip. Philip wants more of the departing Jesus. Philip wants to see the Father to believe. In verse 8 he makes a request to see the Father. Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father." And Jesus gives us another truth of his presence. In verse 11, he says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." It's another claim of Jesus' deity. He's claiming equality with the Father. Jesus is in the Father. The Father is in Jesus. There's complete unity between the Father and Jesus. When Jesus is present, so is the Father. When Jesus is with us, so is the Father.

So how are Jesus and the Father one? How can Jesus' presence mean the Father's present? This points us to the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms three things. The first thing is that there's one God. And only one God. There are not many gods. There are not three gods. There's one God. The second thing the doctrine of the Trinity affirms is that God is three persons. The three persons are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The third thing the doctrine of the Trinity affirms is that each person is fully God. The Father is fully God. The Son is fully God. And the Spirit is fully God. So in the Trinity, the Father and Son are one. There's unity. This means that if Jesus is with us, the Father is with us.

So let's look at what the oneness of the Father and Son mean for our loss. Let's apply this to the relationship strains we're facing in this season. With COVID-19 mitigations, friendships are strained. With the election, there's fighting. Old arguments have crept up. Friends and family refuse to speak. And in anger we wonder, God, what are you up to? Won't you speak to me? Won't you tell me? What are you doing? But if we're a believer and facing broken relationships we must reflect on *who* we know. Jesus is more than a good teacher. He's more than a holy man. To believe in Jesus is to know God himself. As relationships break, you know the God who flung galaxies into the sky. As friendships distance, you know the God who formed the atom. As fights continue, you know the God who filled the oceans, skies, and land with life. This is because we know Jesus. And Jesus is one with the Father. Jesus with us, means the Father is with us. We should find comfort in that we know God himself.

JESUS IS WITH US THROUGH PRAYER. (12-14)

So the first truth is that Jesus will be with us in eternal life. The second truth is that Jesus with us means the Father is with us. What's the third truth of Jesus' presence? Why trust the departed Jesus? The third truth of Jesus' presence is: Jesus is with us through prayer.

After Jesus' departure, he's going to do amazing things through his followers. Jesus tells us of our part in his new season of work in verse 12, when he 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." Jesus says, my power will so move through my people that you'll do greater things than I've done. But how are we going to do greater things than what Jesus has done? After Jesus ascended to the Father, just consider the incredible work that Jesus has done. While on earth, Jesus only preached in Palestine. Jesus occasionally ministered to Gentiles. Jesus had a small reach. But while Jesus is in heaven, the gospel is reaching the nations. Some two billion people claim the name of Christ. The gospel is transforming our world. Jesus is doing greater work through his suffering people.

But how is Jesus doing these works? What's the power behind these great works? Jesus tells us of this power in verse 13: "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do." Prayer is the power behind these greater works. Prayerful people is how Jesus performs these greater works. The disciples have deep, unending needs. But prayer provides from God's abundant and limitless resources. Jesus responds to our prayer. Jesus is with us in prayer. We must pray.

Jesus builds upon the power behind these great works. He builds on prayer's power in John 14:15-31. There you'll see Jesus' presence through the Spirit. And how the Spirit works through God's prayerful people. But today, we'll focus on Jesus' presence through prayer.

So if Jesus is with us in prayer, and if we are to pray in Jesus' name, how do we pray in Jesus' name? It's certainly not a magical formula to get stuff: "Dear God, I want a Lamborghini Aventador please. Make sure it's lime green. In Jesus' name I pray." That's not what it means. Jesus never explicitly says what it means to pray in his name. But here are a couple of my thoughts. The first thing praying in Jesus' name means is to pray for God's purposes and desires. Our family doesn't believe; we pray for their conversion. We have conflict with other believers; we pray for spiritual growth. There's sickness; we pray for God's glory through physical healing. We feel political loss; we pray for ruling authorities to have God's wisdom. In difficulty, we pray for God's purposes and desires.

The second thing praying in Jesus' name means is to pray in humility. God, not my will but your will. God you know better. Your timing is better. Your way is better. In difficulty, we must pray humbly. This is what it means to pray in Jesus' name.

So what does this mean if the departed Jesus is with us in prayer? In our suffering and difficulty, are we praying to our present Savior? In our loss and frustration, do we call out to a present Jesus? Consider this, if God said yes to all of our prayers in the past week what would happen? Would our kids who have run from God profess faith? Would our loved ones who are sick be healed? Would our broken friendships find restoration through the gospel's power? Would the despair in our heart find healing? Prayer is Jesus' means of working through his people. Are we praying as if Jesus will respond? In our difficulty, a departed Jesus is with us in prayer. In our struggle, he is with us always. We must pray.

When Jesus calls us to trust him, when Jesus tells us to hope in him, it's as applicable today as it was when Jesus first said these words.

Yes, Jesus is departed. But Jesus is preparing for us eternal life with him. Yes, Jesus is gone. But we must remember who Jesus is. Jesus is one with the Father. Yes, Jesus is at the Father's right hand. But Jesus' presence is with us in prayer. These are critical truths for troubled hearts.

Anything else you can look to will ultimately disappoint. But Jesus will never fail.