

Trust in God

John 14:1-4

When Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled," He did so in the face of many real troubles. In just the dialogue preceding John 14:1 Jesus had spoken of the disciple who would betray Him which was personal for the disciples since any betrayal of Jesus would certainly affect them as well. Then Jesus told them that He was going away and that they could not come with Him. For three plus years their lives had been about nothing else but being with Jesus wherever He might be and they were always welcome - encouraged and challenged to stay with Jesus, they would have failed in their discipleship had they not done so. How shocking it must have been to hear Jesus say that He was going and that they could not come. And third, when Peter protested claiming that he was ready to go wherever Jesus was going and that he was ready to lay down his life for Jesus sake, Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied Me three times."

These were all very disturbing words. They were unwelcome as the disciples did not want to consider any of what Jesus had announced as what would happen as even possible. Imagine one of the 12 saying, "But Lord, in my world, these things are not even possible." And, we realize that Jesus did not tell them the worst of it. He did not say plainly that by that time on the next day He would be dead.

We are often distracted by upsetting circumstances. Usually the seriousness of the circumstances do not come close to the kind of news that Jesus had laid on the disciples but even the trivial can be very upsetting and these distractions can get us out of sorts and derail our productivity and our peace. As I write, my daughter has gone for a walk with a friend and she has not come back as soon as I expected that she would. And, earlier in the day I misplaced my cell phone and I have not been able to find it. To make matters worse, my wife is away at the ladies retreat and if she were to try to reach me then as of right now, she would not be able to do so. So, when I want to get in the car and find my daughter or

look for my cell phone in places where I have already looked three times, I know that my daughter is ok and my cell phone either will or won't show up and the only time I have to write my sermon is now and so I have to somehow find a way to bear down and do it.

In the face of these troubles, these unwelcome circumstances and these uncomfortable distractions, what are we to do? Jesus encouraged the disciples to begin with a faith check. "You believe in God. Believe also in Me." This was a word meant to reset the disciples thinking. They could remain caught up in all the uncertainties and the unknowables that Jesus had spoken to them or they could choose instead to remember and focus on what they did know. It might be worth mentioning that the source of the upset and the source of the assurance was the same. Just because something is difficult to deal with does not mean that we should remain ignorant or refuse to accept that it is reality. Jesus was putting these difficulties in front of the disciples and then turning the conversation so that they could handle the stress they were to encounter.

Again, think about what you know. You know God and you know Me, Jesus was saying. And this is enough. What did they know about God? They knew the stories of God's creative power and His work to call His people to Himself. They knew His law and they knew the history of Israel and the words of the prophets. Even more experientially, they had witnessed the union of their perception of God with their experience of life with Jesus. They had seen Jesus do only what God could do and it was good. Water turned to wine, a Samaritan village converted, a cripple walked, the 5000 fed, the man born blind who could see, Lazarus raised from the dead, the teachings of Jesus that amazed and challenged. They were witness to all of this and so they did believe in God and they did believe in Jesus.

Jesus was challenging the disciples to a faith of the same character that Paul would later attribute to Abraham. Abraham demonstrated his faith by putting what he knew of God up against the present crisis in his life. This is exactly what Jesus asked of His disciples. Against the upsetting specter of their immediate future there was God and the power and love that they knew they could find in

Him. They had been with Jesus in the boat when the storm came up and the waves crashed over the gunwales so that they all thought they would drown and they had woken Jesus up and He had chided them, "O you of little faith." And then, "Peace be still." Jesus stilled the storm. Jesus assured them of His constant care. In any storm if Jesus is with you then you are just moments away from tranquil waves.

But then Jesus added, "In My Father's house there are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also." This was a specific answer to the trouble that they were facing. They could not go where Jesus was going but Jesus said here that He was only going away for their benefit. He was preparing a place for them in order to come again and receive them to Himself where they would remain for eternity. This is the ultimate answer to all of our questions and troubles. For none of our troubles are lasting but only temporary. The disciples were well acquainted with what it was to be with Jesus. This was all they wanted. It was the fulfillment of all their desires. And this is what Jesus promised to them. To enter into the promise we have to learn to value it. Time with Jesus now and forever. This is the remedy we need to all of our troubles.

Jesus added, "And where I go you know and the way you know." The disciples did not think that they knew where Jesus was going but He said that they did. They had known the Father through the Son. He had been their path to God. They would have said that Jesus had taught them all they knew about God and they did know God. There was only one place where Jesus could be going if He was leaving them and this was to the Father. And Jesus was the way to the Father.