

## **Sermon: Heart Trouble**

**Reading:** John 14:1-14

### **Introduction.**

There are times when each of us suffers from a troubled heart. This is something the medical profession cannot see on an X-ray, detect with blood tests, see under a microscope or hear through a stethoscope. The effects of the troubled heart and restless spirit can be detected in raised blood pressure, signs of stress and anxiety and sleepless nights. However the cure of the troubled heart cannot be written on a prescription, found in a pharmacy, removed by a surgeon no matter how skilled. A pill, narcotics or hitting the bottle may elevate some of the symptoms in the short term but it won't cure the troubled heart. Many have tried, therapists, psychologists, biologists, scientists and the medical profession have all sought to solve this problem but the solution to the troubled heart remains out of reach, even of the greatest minds.

No one is exempt from this condition. It can come upon us at any time, whether rich or poor, famous or infamous, big or small, none are immune. There is no door to lock it behind, no lid can be permanently kept on it and no bars can keep it out.

For the troubled heart is caused by fears within and fears without, fears of losing, fears of the unknown, fears of the unseen and fears of the visible, fears of the not yet. Christians are not exempt from the troubled road which we journey between grace and glory but the Saint has a cure, if they have faith to apply it.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the only known cure for the troubled heart and the restless spirit, having the faith to believe more deeply and entirely means we can rest more assuredly.

### **Fear of the unseen**

I've been surprised at the level of anxiety that exists at this time across the west and even within our own communities. Anxiety levels are increasing, even amongst the young. The fear of Covid is changing our behaviours, how we live, interact, mingle, reach out, stay in, shop, etc. Our way of life has changed and this is generating behaviours and responses which were not part of our life style a few weeks ago.

I've seen people frantically scrubbing supermarket trolley handles, shoppers wearing masks and gloves, queuers anxiously cautioning each other to take a few steps further back. Some are afraid to touch things not scrubbed, others afraid to return to work and many are worried about their future.

When we begin losing control of decisions we can make for our lives, everything becomes uncertain and we feel vulnerable. Feelings of vulnerability remind us we are not in control or as strong or independent as we once thought we were.

Fear increases our levels of anxiety, especially when watching the news on TV and even worse when we feed our worries into our imaginations then the monsters are fed! There is probably no worse time to let our worries feed our imagination than when we are alone, in the quiet in the still of the night. I know, I've been there!

We can reach for the bottle or the pills but this is only a short term temporary remedy and offers no long term solution, but can create long term problems. However if we calm our hearts a little and listen to the Spirit speak we can hear him say what he has spoken to every Christian over 2 millennia - 'Be not afraid'. This is where faith is so important.

In our reading today, Jesus knows his ministry is about to come to a dramatic end. The cross lies immediately ahead and there is no turning back. Jesus now wants to prepare his disciples for what is about to come. He shares a meal with his closest friends and prepares them with words of comfort knowing they will need to dig deep to face the crisis hours which lie ahead for each one of them. In our reading today this is the context and Jesus tells them,

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me'.

**(John 14:1)**

Notice Jesus is telling his disciples as you believe in God, believe also in me. This is a profound opening statement. God is all Almighty, all powerful, all knowing and ever present, these attributes are what we determine the characteristics of God, setting Him above everything else. Without these attributes He would not be God. Strikingly for his disciples, Jesus is placing himself in the same category, equality with God.

Our faith is not a blind faith in something unknowable or unseen, our faith is not a childish religion in which we believe without reason, nor is faith simply a set of religious practices and observances, liturgies, rules or systems to follow. No, our faith is in a person, who is Divine, 'Jesus the Son of God' **(Mark 1:1)**. He who walked with us,

'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have gazed upon and touched with our own hands'

**(1 John 1:1)**

Our hope is a living hope, not a hope lost buried remaining in the tomb. No our faith is not wishful thinking, childish belief or observing systems but is faith in a person, divine, our risen saviour.

If your not convinced Jesus is placing himself equal with God, consider the next verse, Jesus says.....

'My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?'

**(John 14:2)**

Think carefully upon these words, what is Jesus saying?

Heaven is a Father's house - it's a home

It's the home of Jesus Christ and the saints who have died in him

Home is generally a place of welcome where we are loved and accepted for who we are

Home is where we are never forgotten and

Home is often where we long to return

Jesus is preparing our place in his Father's house,

Not a boarding house

Not a lodging house

Not a rented house

Not a mortgaged house

Not a hotel

But an eternal home, in the Heavenly Kingdom

We are not citizens of the world trying to make it to heaven, no we are citizens of heaven trying to make our way through this world. The hymn writer puts it this way, 'We are pilgrims through this barren land', for we are only passing through and the hymn writer

continues, 'Subdue my anxious fears'. Our hope is not in those things which can be lost, stolen, broken or rot in this world. For those who strive to live for what this world offers will lose everything, because it's only temporary. However our hope is in Jesus who promises us an inheritance which can never be lost or taken away and it's a Heavenly place called home.

Our bodies are only temporary and wear out, heaven and the resurrected body are eternal and will never again become subject to the laws of entropy, where all things naturally rot, decay and break down over time. For the realm of God is eternal and the resurrection is eternal. So in the Father's house there are many mansions meaning there is room for all believers, for the Saints, for the weakest of believers and for the strongest. The feeblest child will find a place of security, comfort and love from our loving Father who has given to us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us while we make our way through this world.

Heaven is the place where Jesus dwells and reigns supreme. For all authority has been given to him on heaven and earth (Matthew 28:28). Jesus sits upon the throne as King. Its amazing to think our King is not distant, separate, locked away in ivory towers, in palaces with guards to stop anyone entering His presence. No, this Lord Jesus is content to dwell amongst his people - sharing the inheritance, saying, 'where I am you shall be also'. Our world is filled with uncertainties, loneliness, anxieties and fears. By contrast the Kingdom of our Saviour is a Paradise, remember what Jesus promised the thief on the cross? There will never be loneliness, insecurity, pain, fear or death again, in that place where Jesus is King, we call our heavenly Father's home. No one is neglected, forgotten nor forsaken, for it is home. There is one thing which we are unsure about as Christians and that is what will it all be like in God's Kingdom and Paul reminds us,

'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived,  
for the things God has prepared for those who love him'  
**(1 Cor 2:9)**

I can live with that. I can live without the knowledge of the detail of the glories that no eye has seen, knowing I can trust the one who has promised to take me there, for Jesus says.....

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that  
you may also be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going"  
**(John 14:3).**

The one thing we can count on is we shall see Christ Jesus and when I am in my darkest valley, even the valley of the shadow of death, I shall not fear for the Good Shepherd is with me and He will lead me to green pastures, still waters and will restore my soul. Is this your hope? No deceit was ever found on the lips of Jesus. Jesus is the Way and the Truth.

Jesus did not shun the cross for he kept his eyes on the glory that awaited. Where His life given as the ransom would bring many sons (and daughters) to glory. Redeeming for himself a people who would become his people, his church.

The church was God's best kept secret through all the ages. For when the church was born on the day of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit came first to the believers in the upper room with the sound of a rushing wind and alighted upon the disciples as tongues of fire and then fell upon 3000 people in the city, the world has never been the same.

It is for the church that Jesus gave up his life and for the church for which he is to return. The church of people whose oil is burning, their lamps shining the light and ready and prepared to meet the groom.

Jesus said he was returning to His Father's house and we know the way! So the question arises as it did with Thomas, 'How can we know the way?' How do we make ourselves ready? This is the one question that should cause us to be anxious until we have settled the answer in our hearts. This is so great a question, the implications are eternal so we dare not get it wrong.

'Thomas said to him, "Lord we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him'.

**(John 14:6-7).**

As we heard last week that the Good Shepherd is the one who leads the flock and the flock listen to his voice and follow him as he leads them in and out. Jesus in the passage from the Good Shepherd reading last week also refers to himself as the 'door' and through Him is the only way. We have to settle this matter in our own hearts.

Is this Jesus the Son of God, the Holy One, the King of Heaven, the Judge of all the earth and the One through whom all creation was made for and through? This Jesus is the One who has made a way possible for us to enter the eternal Kingdom by offering himself as the atoning sacrifice. Paying the price for our sins, a price we cannot afford to pay. His whole life demonstrated this from his birth, his miracles, the prophetic manner of his death and his resurrection. This is sizeable and considerable evidence. It does not take blind faith, without reason to be a Christian, but consider the Word of God and what does it say?

The next stage is crucial, only when we repent, trusting in the Lord Jesus and baptised for the forgiveness of our sins that we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then we are Justified, reconciled and begin the process of being sanctified. We are saved for an eternal Kingdom. Have we truly repented of our sins, given our lives to the Good Shepherd and follow Jesus wholeheartedly - no longer doubting, but, 'Trust and obey, for there is no other way.....' said the hymn writer

Thomas has shown us after his period of doubting in his repentance and faith declaration as he falls to his knees and says,

'My Lord and my God'

**(John 20:28)**

A humble and contrite heart God will not reject and a profession of faith is the declaration of turning to Christ and our life should be producing fruits of repentance in our walk with Jesus as a demonstration of the Holy Spirit within us. Having faith in Jesus to believe the many promises of scripture, the things hoped for are waiting for us.

Being a Christian would be impossible had the tomb not been empty on the Third Day, and of course the grave is still empty and we can rejoice with every Christian who knows in their heart as proclaimed by Paul,

"Where, O death, is your victory?  
Where, O death is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

**(1Cor 15:55-58).**

‘Phillip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me Phillip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father...”

**(John 14: 8-10).**

Jesus response is the most affirming testimony in scripture as to Jesus identity. Jesus speaks and acts for God and God is in him. He proclaimed that the Father and the Son equally possess all attributes of deity. In other words Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh. God incarnate. The word became flesh and dwelt amongst us (John 1:14).

### **Summary**

Are our hearts troubled for future and for the uncertainty ahead, then learn to apply our faith and trust the Good Shepherd who knows how to lead his flock home and what a home it is. Christians have words of hope which takes us beyond the grave and a hope that is steadfast and certain. For our hope is in a living Saviour and he tells us be not be afraid, believe in God, believe also in me.

Jesus is preparing a place for us. **Amen**