

INTRODUCTION

I am a big fan of Winston Churchill. He had a razor-sharp wit. He had an ongoing public feud with Lady Astor. At one event Lady Astor became so angry at Churchill that she said, "Mr. Churchill, if you were my husband, I would put poison in your tea." To which he replied, "And if I WERE you husband, madam, I would gladly drink it!"

On another occasion, Lady Astor said, "Mr. Churchill, you are despicably drunk." He said, "You are correct, madam. And you are despicably ugly...But in the morning, I shall be sober."

But one of my favorite quotes from Churchill applies to these trying times we are now facing. He spoke these words during the height of the German Blitzkrieg. He said, "When you are going through hell. Keep going."

That is great advice. We are all taking extraordinary measures to flatten the curve of the Coronavirus. Let's keep going. Better days are ahead. Thank you for doing your part to keep our community safe.

We are going to keep going through the Gospel According to John. Since we are at the fourteenth chapter of John, I need to give you an important explanation of this section of the Bible. We have four gospel stories about Jesus in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The structure of John's story is different from that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Those three stories are often called the Synoptic Gospels because they follow a similar chronological time line and most of the stories are about what Jesus said and did in Galilee.

In contrast, most of John's story takes place in Jerusalem, and he organizes his biography of Jesus around seven miracles or signs that Jesus performed. We have already looked at all seven signs. The last one was when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in John 11. And John also highlights seven "I am" statements of Jesus. We've already covered five of these, and we'll read the next one in today's passage. But perhaps the one thing that makes John's story of Jesus unique is because John adds this amazing section that we'll start today.

The setting is the upper room in Jerusalem where they had the Last Supper. Judas, the betrayer, has gone out into the night. And Jesus will be crucified the very next morning. But before John recorded the arrest of Jesus, he adds this marvelous section of teaching that Jesus gave to the disciples. It's here in chapters 14 through 16. They leave the upper room at the end of John 14, but Jesus continues to teach. It's often called the Farewell Message of Jesus. Then in John 17 we read the words of the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible. I call it the REAL Lord's prayer. He actually prayed for us that night. Then they eventually arrive at the Garden of Gethsemane in John chapter 18.

Beginning here in John 14 Jesus shares a bounty of dynamic spiritual truths with the eleven disciples, and we get to experience them too.

Before we read John 14, remember that the disciples were confused and afraid. They were troubled that there had been a betrayer in their midst. It was in that setting that Jesus spoke these powerful words, including his sixth "I am" statement.

John 14:1-11 "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to where I am going." "Lord," Thomas said, "we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." "Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.

The eleven disciples were stressed out. Jesus dropped the bombshell that one of the group was going to betray Him. And He had told them he was going somewhere that they couldn't follow him. They all knew the Jewish leaders were looking to arrest Jesus and His disciples. The stress level was high. The tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife. To put it in East Texas vernacular, Jesus said, "Hey guys, don't freak out. Trust God. Trust me. We got this."

There's a lot of stress in our world today. Even before the pandemic Americans were stressed out to the max. And the threat of this invisible virus has only increased our stress level. You might say that we're all stressed up with nowhere to go.

In this message, I want to talk about God's Cure for a Troubled Heart. We'll examine three powerful truths that can give us hope and peace in the midst of troubled times.

1. DON'T LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED: Jesus is at His Father's house preparing a place for you.

About 2,000 years ago Jesus rose from the dead and He's alive for evermore. After His resurrection, He spent about 40 days with His disciples. Then they went up to the top of the Mount of Olives and He ascended from their sight back into Heaven. So what's He been doing all this time? Well according to His words here, He's been preparing a place for you and me.

Jesus is at His Father's House in Heaven preparing a place for us. If you want more information about Heaven, I wrote a book entitled *Pastor David's Travel Guide to Heaven*. You can get it on Amazon as a print copy or as an e-book which ever you prefer.

In that book, I give a summary of what Heaven will be like. If you are a believer, one nanosecond after you die, you'll be in the presence of Jesus in paradise. We will know our loved ones in Heaven; in fact, we'll know everyone in Heaven as if they were our closest friend on earth. There will be animals in heaven. Babies that die, both new-born and pre-born are welcomed into Heaven and we will know them in the fullness of their potential vitality. We won't be angels in Heaven; instead we'll have a powerful eternal body like the resurrected body of Jesus. With this resurrection body, we won't be subject to age, disease, time, or gravity. There will be a new Heaven and a new earth that will be like the restoration of the Garden of Eden—only much better. We won't be lounging around on clouds playing harps; we'll have jobs and serve the Lord. We'll see Jesus and know Him in a perfect environment of fellowship and worship.

The King James Version says, "In my Father's House are many mansions." That's an unfortunate translation that caused some people to imagine that we're going to be living in our own mansion, separated from everyone else like in a subdivision with huge lots. But Jesus used the word *moné*, which means rooms.

When you read "rooms," don't imagine a private room with walls and a door you can lock- like a hotel. There will be no need for locks in heaven. Think about sharing an enormous house with all the other Heavenly Family members, more like a massive estate house where we spend time together with the Lord.

When Paul wrote about Heaven, He used the metaphor of a building. He wrote, "For we know that if our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands. Indeed, we groan in this tent, desiring to put on our heavenly dwelling." (2 Corinthians 5:1-2 CSB)

Jesus said He would prepare a place for us. Heaven is a real place. I always capitalize the word Heaven, just like I capitalize the words Tyler and Texas.

Sometimes skeptics ridicule Christians about Heaven. They say all we care about is "Pie in the sky by and by." But the Christian life is so much more than just going to Heaven when you die. It's not just "Pie in the sky, by and by." It's also "steak on your plate while you wait."

I'd be a Christian even if there we didn't go to Heaven when we die. Following Christ means that we treat others with kindness and compassion. We forgive other people. If every person on the planet lived according to the Bible, this world would be a much better place.

But even though some people say that Christians are so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good, just the opposite is true.

C. S. Lewis wrote: "Throughout history, the Christians who did most for this present world were those who thought most of the next...Early Christians left their mark on earth precisely because their minds were pre-occupied with heaven. It is since Christians ceased thinking of the other world that we have become so ineffective in this one. Aim at heaven and you'll get the

earth thrown in. Aim at the earth and you'll miss both." (*The Joyful Christian* p. 138)

I have a pastor friend who told me a story about being on a flight during a storm a few years ago. The flight attendants told the passengers to remain seated with their seatbelts firmly fastened. He said the aircraft would suddenly rise and then fall. Lighting could be seen and thunder heard. It was really scary, so he was praying. But when he glanced around he saw a young girl seated across from him who didn't seem to be worried. She was about eight years old. She was singing and reading a book. She seemed to be clueless about the bad weather. After they landed, the pastor said, "Young lady, you sure were brave during that bad weather we went through." She smiled and said, "Oh, I wasn't worried. My dad is the pilot and he is bringing me home."

So you don't need to be afraid of the storm we're going through. Jesus said that He is preparing a place for us and He will return to take us Home to His Father's house. So, don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Jesus.

2. DON'T LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED: You CAN be certain about spending eternity in Heaven.

One reason people are on edge is because there is so much uncertainty. What if I, or someone I love contract the virus? Am I still going to have a job? Will I be able to retire? When will this pandemic be over? Will life ever be the same again? There is a lot of uncertainty in our world right now.

If we just could get some kind of assurance that life will work out—then maybe we can hold on.

I want to remind you than in the midst of so much uncertainty there are some things you can be *absolutely certain* about: God loves you and Jesus died to give you eternal life.

Over the past forty years I've met people who didn't have the blessed assurance of their salvation. They loved the Lord, but they never came to full assurance that they would go to Heaven when they died. I've even had them say to me, "Nobody can know for SURE if they're going to Heaven."

There's a powerful scripture in 1 John that guarantees that a Believer can have certainty of their salvation. The Bible says, "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13 CSB)

You don't have to have a "hope so" salvation. You don't have to have a "think so" salvation. You can have a know so salvation.

In one of the most-loved chapters of the Bible, David sang about overcoming fear. He sang, "Yeah though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me." Then he concluded the song with a testimony of absolute assurance. "Surely your

goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23:6 NIV)

As I grow older, I find myself thinking more and more about my friends and loved ones who are in Heaven. I miss them. I'm in no hurry to join them. But I'm really looking forward to seeing Jesus and seeing my loved ones soon.

Just this past week, Jimmy Breckenridge graduated to Heaven. He was a precious Downs Syndrome man who used to love to smile and hug. Jimmy is the reason why Breckenridge Village of Tyler exists today. His parents, Jean and Robert Breckenridge, had a dream of a beautiful facility where Jimmy and others like him could be cared for after their parents died. Jimmy knew he was going to Heaven. He loved to smile and talk about heaven. Because of his Downs Syndrome, I sometimes had trouble understanding his speech. And now it's my turn to smile when I think of the joyful reunion in Heaven that took place this week. Jimmy was able to greet his Lord and his parents with a clear mind and perfectly clear speech for the first time.

Oh, my friend, you don't want to miss out on being a part of the Father's House in Heaven. He has room for you as well. Jimmy's there because Jimmy placed his childlike faith in Jesus. And you can do that too.

J.I. Packer is a great Christian theologian. He's 93 years old and recently wrote this about his anticipation of Heaven: "As I get older, I find that I appreciate God and people and good and lovely things more and more intensely; so it is pure delight to think that this enjoyment will continue and increase in some form, literally forever. In fact, Christians inherit the destiny which fairy tales envisaged in fancy: we live and live happily, and by God's endless mercy will live happily ever after." (*Your Father Loves You*, p. 68)

So, don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Jesus.

3. DON'T LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED: Jesus promised to be your ONLY way to Heaven.

In John 14:6 Jesus made the sixth of seven "I am" statements. The significance of these declarations is that every time Jesus made one, He was identifying Himself as God. At the burning bush in Exodus 3, Moses asked God what His name was. God said, "I am." For each of these "I am" statements, Jesus was claiming to be God.

In His conversation, Jesus said "You know the way to the place I'm going." He had just been talking about going to His Father's house. But Thomas who I call honest Thomas wasn't convinced. He said, "I must have missed the memo. Where are you going? And how can we know the way?" That was a great set-up, Thomas. Jesus replied with some of the most important words ever uttered in the history of our planet, Jesus said, "I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life." (John 14:6 CSB)

Billy Graham preached face-to-face to over 210 million people during his ministry as an evangelist; he reached hundreds of millions more by television. And at every crusade site in the language of the land, he displayed a huge banner saying, "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'" Because that is a concise explanation of who Jesus is and what Jesus does.

And it is an outrageous claim. He claimed that no person could come to God the Father except through Him. There are many syncretistic religions in the world today who claim that there are many pathways to God—and that sounds logical and rational. But Jesus left no room for misunderstanding. He said, that there is a narrow pathway that leads to eternal life—and He is that pathway.

That has always been the preaching of the gospel. In Acts 4, after God used Peter to heal a paralyzed man in Jerusalem, the same religious leaders who had arranged for Jesus to be crucified demanded an explanation. Peter boldly stood before them and proclaimed, "Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy. This Jesus is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12 CSB)

Some people, particularly in academic circles, insist that there was nothing supernatural about Jesus of Nazareth. They write Jesus off as a 1st Century Jewish rabbi who created some wonderful moral principles in the Sermon on the Mount. But you can't ignore the claims of Christ in John 14. He claimed to be the only way to the Father. He claimed to be ONE with God. He said "The Father is in me and I am in the Father."

Clive Staples Lewis was a brilliant college professor, an agnostic, but once he seriously considered the claims of Christ, he became one of the greatest Christian authors of the 20th Century. He wrote: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." (*Mere Christianity*)

Jesus didn't say, "I'll show you the way or I am A way." He said, "I AM THE way. He didn't say, "I'll teach you the truth or I am A truth." He said, "I AM THE truth." And He didn't say, "I'll give you A life." He said, "I AM THE life." Jesus isn't one of the ways to God—and He's not even the BEST way to God. He is the ONLY way to God.

CONCLUSION

I read an interesting article this week entitled "The American Crisis." The author had some interesting observations. "These are days that try men's souls. It is surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them. Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection...Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that our country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it."¹

Those are powerful words of hope. But if you think it was written recently, you'd be wrong. Those words were penned 244 years ago by American patriot, Thomas Paine, when our American ancestors were facing the overwhelming enemy of the only military superpower on the planet—the British Military Machine. In the midst of the Revolutionary War, revival broke out among the Americans. There are reports that in the middle of winter that Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge would often gather for an all-night prayer meeting. And as we know, with dependence and help from Heaven, they came through this crisis to victory.

I shared that with you because right now, we are in the middle of the greatest crisis of a generation. There is a lot of panic and uncertainty, but I want to assure you that our nation and our churches have survived every crisis in the past and we've come through it stronger than when we entered it. The same will be true as come through this crisis. We will endure and we will come through this battle stronger than ever before. Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Jesus.

¹ Paine, Thomas. "The American Crisis," Dec. 1776.

OUTLINE

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1. Jesus is at His Father's house preparing a place for you.

"For we know that if our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands. Indeed, we groan in this tent, desiring to put on our heavenly dwelling." 2 *Corinthians 5:1-2 CSB*

2. You CAN be certain about spending eternity in Heaven.

"I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." 1 *John 5:13 CSB*

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3. Jesus promised to be your ONLY way to Heaven.

"Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy. This Jesus is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." *Acts 4:10-12 CSB*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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