

# John 14:1-17

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Preacher: David MacPherson

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     May it be our experience this evening that God's statutes would be our great delight and that they would be our counselors.
- So let's turn to God's Word and receive counsel from God's Word and delight in it. Are you sometimes confused?
- Are you ever afraid, perhaps afraid of being left alone or a failing in some duty or responsibility that you have?
- Have there been circumstances in your life, perhaps even now, where you're contemplating giving up? You see no way forward, no way to overcome whatever obstacle is in the way.
- Is there something, whatever it might be, something on your immediate horizon that troubles you in your own life, perhaps in the life of somebody you care deeply for, and you simply don't know what to do and how to respond to these circumstances?
- [ 1 : 1 1 ]     Well, all of the above was true in some measure of the disciples when Jesus spoke to them as recorded for us by John at the beginning of chapter 14, when he directs to them these words, Do not let your hearts be troubled.
- Of course, there would be no need or no purpose in speaking to them in that way had it not been the case that their hearts were troubled.
- They were confused. They were confused by what he had been saying to them. In the previous chapter we read from chapter 13, and there in verse 36 we have Simon Peter asking him, Lord, where are you going?
- Jesus had been speaking about where he was going, and Simon Peter, no doubt in representation of the others, well, he simply didn't know what Jesus was talking about. He was confused.
- They were afraid. As Jesus spoke very clearly, even though they didn't understand where he was going, it was clear that he was going, and they were afraid of his departure.
- [ 2 : 2 0 ]     They were afraid of being left alone, bereft of his company and his counsel and his friendship. And they were troubled by the future.
- The prospect of being left alone troubled them. And to cap it all, it seemed by the language that Jesus was using, and indeed in reality it proved to be the case, that this was all very imminent.
- This wasn't something in the dim and distant future that they could still kind of prepare for. It was imminent, this departure that was confusing them, that they didn't understand.
- It was just around the corner, and indeed it was. Now we describe them as confused, as afraid, as troubled, and I think it's fair to say that they were all of these things, and yet actually when we read the passage, at no point do they verbalize that.
- They don't say that. Isn't that the way it often is in our own lives? We know what it is to be confused, to be afraid, to be troubled, and sometimes we just keep it to ourselves.

[ 3 : 25 ] We're reluctant to recognize that or to tell anybody else about it, and we just keep it inside and struggle with it or try to struggle with it by ourselves.

Well, what does Jesus say to them? Well, we've read the passage, and we read that command, that encouragement of Jesus at the beginning of chapter 14 again.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not let your hearts be troubled. I wonder this prohibition, because we can't think of it as a prohibition, we can think of it also as an encouragement.

However you describe it, is it reasonable on the part of Jesus to direct these words to the disciples? Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Is it perhaps in the same league as a very trite, don't worry, be happy, it will be okay, when everything would suggest otherwise? And the difficulty with the words of Jesus is compounded by the fact that this is not just friendly advice, but a command that they are expected to obey.

[ 4 : 40 ] The language that Jesus employs is in the form of a command. They are being commanded not to be troubled. It seems a strange thing, to be commanded not to be troubled.

But not only that, but Jesus expects them to obey. They are to stop feeling troubled and afraid. It's not a harsh command, but it is a firm command.

Indeed, their obedience to this command would serve as a measure of their love for Jesus. You see, further on in the chapter, in the same conversation that Jesus is having with the disciples, he says there in verse 15, If you love me, keep my commands.

Now, clearly Jesus isn't speaking only about this command, but nonetheless, this command comes under the umbrella of what Jesus says there. If you love me, keep my commands.

He says the measure of your love for me will be demonstrated by your obedience to my commands. And one of my commands is this. Do not let your hearts be troubled.

[ 5 : 44 ] What are we to make of this? Is it wrong to be troubled in heart? Well, that depends. It depends on what it is that is troubling us. We know that Jesus himself was troubled in heart on different occasions.

As we read of his life on earth, we remember Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, and he was troubled in heart. Now, Jesus was without sin, so clearly being troubled in heart in and of itself is not sinful.

There are circumstances when it's right to be troubled in heart. We think of what was to happen just a few hours after what we are reading of here in John's Gospel, and we think of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and there he was troubled in heart at the prospect of his sin bearing death.

And again, no guilt is associated with that. So why was it wrong for the disciples? Why is it that Jesus says to them, don't be troubled, and implicitly saying to them, you ought not to be troubled?

Well, contrary to appearances, their confusion, their fear, their distress was unfounded. And Jesus gently but firmly goes on to provide the antidote to their troubled heart by means of giving them reasons why their distress was unfounded.

[ 7 : 11 ] And that's what we want to do this evening. We want to identify three of the reasons Jesus gives to his disciples why they need not be troubled, indeed why they ought not to be troubled.

And as we consider the reasons that Jesus gave to the disciples, I would certainly encourage you to take these as reasons for yourself in the face of your troubles and your troubled heart.

Examine that troubled heart in the light of the Scriptures. Now, it may be that the troubled heart that you know is well-founded, and you have good reason to be troubled.

Or perhaps that is not the case. Perhaps the reasons that Jesus gives, the promises that Jesus identifies, ought to and can unburden you and help you to see that that distress and fear and confusion need not continue to grip you.

Well, let's examine the reason that Jesus gives to his disciples for not being troubled. And I think Jesus effectively says to them three things. He perhaps says other things that we could draw out, but there are three things that I want to highlight that Jesus says to them that are intended to help them obey the command, let not your hearts be troubled.

[ 8 : 29 ] First of all, Jesus says to them, I'll be with you in heaven. I'll mention what the three things are, and then we'll think of each of them in turn and explain what I mean by them. But the first one is this, I'll be with you in heaven.

But then secondly, he says to them, I'll be near you from heaven. And then thirdly, I'll send a gift to you from heaven. First of all, I'll be with you in heaven.

Let's read verses two and three. Let's read from verse one of chapter 14 and draw out what Jesus is saying in this regard. Do not let your hearts be troubled.

You believe in God, believe also in me. And then especially in verse two, he 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?

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, that you also may be where I am.

[ 9 : 32 ] The disciples are troubled. They fear his departure. And he says, yes, I am going, but I'm going to prepare a place for you. And more importantly, I'm coming back and I'm going to take you to be with me.

You are going to be with me. Don't be troubled by my departure because you need to see the end game as it were. And in due course, we will be together again.

So don't be troubled by my departure. Don't be confused by it. Don't be afraid because of it because I'm going to prepare a place I'll come back and we will be together.

They're afraid of losing Jesus, of him leaving and never returning. And Jesus challenges the disciples to trust him, to believe what he says concerning the future. I am going, but I'll be back.

It's interesting that he begins his argument against them being troubled pointing into the future, pointing to heaven or certainly to the new heavens and the new earth. Why does he begin there?

[ 10 : 34 ] In some distant prospect. What must have seemed to the disciples a very distant prospect. Even for us, it may seem quite a distant prospect. Well, I think the reason Jesus begins there is that heaven or the new heavens and the new earth are our ultimate destiny or dwelling place.

They may seem very distant in time for us as we are so founded or grounded in our present reality. But in the grand scheme, in the big picture, it is heaven or the new heavens and new earth that are our ultimate and permanent dwelling place.

And so, Jesus points his disciples to look in that direction. This world, certainly in its current, broken state, is not our home. We are just a passing through.

We are, as Paul reminds us, to be those who love the coming of Jesus. That is where our focus is. While we continue, of course, in the present to seek to live lives that are pleasing and useful to God.

This is the first reason that Jesus gives to the disciples why they ought not to be troubled, why they ought not to be fearful or confused. I'll be with you in heaven. We will be together.

[ 11 : 54 ] I'm going, but I'm coming back and we will be together. Well, that's into the future and it's certainly a prospect that can comfort us, but perhaps at one level we might say, well, that's great, but what about now?

What about now? Well, Jesus goes on to speak about the here and now and he promises them a second or he grants to them a second promise. I'll be near you from heaven or I'll hear you from heaven, we might put it in that way.

We're going to jump to verse 12. From verse 5 through to verse 11, you have a couple of questions being posed, first by Thomas and then by Philip. Jesus answers those questions and then in verse 12 he picks up on these reasons that he gives why the disciples ought not to be troubled.

Notice there in verse 12, very truly I tell you whoever believes in me and there that statement whoever believes in me makes the connection with what we saw at the very beginning of the chapter.

Believe in God, believe also in me and Jesus picks up on this theme in verse 12 and what does he go on to say? Very truly I tell you whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father and I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

[ 13 : 15 ] You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it. Jesus is saying to the disciples or one way of paraphrasing what he's saying is this, I'll be near you from heaven.

The disciples are afraid of failure in his absence. You see, while they've been with Jesus they were involved in the works that Jesus was doing.

You remember the occasions when they were sent out by Jesus and they did great things, great wonders and as they participated with Jesus there was a sense in which they were involved in the great works that he did but now they're thinking but if he's gone there's no way we're going to be able to do any of that stuff.

There's no way we're going to be able to continue doing the things that we were able to do when Jesus was with us and so there's this fear of failure in his absence but Jesus assures them that the reverse will be the case.

He says, yes, I am going. You're right on that. I am going. I will be leaving you in one sense of that word but it is not true that that will mean that you will be incapable of doing what you have been doing.

[ 14 : 30 ] Far from it, Jesus says that they will accomplish greater works. They will do greater works. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things than these.

Now what is Jesus saying? What are these greater works? Well that in itself has and continues to generate great debate. What are these greater works that Jesus is speaking of?

But I don't want to really focus on identifying what these greater works are but rather ask another question. who will do these greater works that Jesus speaks of?

Well we've read the verses from 12 to 14. We can just kind of return to them and just look at them more carefully. In verse 12, anyone who has faith in me. So clearly he is speaking about the very disciples that he is addressing.

He's saying you are going to do these greater works. If you have faith in me you will do these greater works. But then that statement is followed by a significant because there at the end of verse 12 because I am going to the Father.

[ 15 : 36 ] And then he goes on to say and I will do whatever you ask in my name. So the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it. So Jesus here identifies the disciples as those who will do these greater works.

But then he also identifies himself as the one who will do these greater works. the disciples will do them. Jesus will do them.

How are we to understand this? Are these different works that will be done somehow in parallel? Surely what Jesus is saying is that they are one and the same works but they will be done in partnership between the disciples and Jesus.

That was true for the disciples that he was speaking to then and it's true for us as well. Let's think about how this partnership works that results in greater works being done.

What is our part in this? Well we are to believe and we are to ask. Indeed the asking will be evidence of our believing. It will be evidence of our trusting.

[ 16 : 43 ] We will ask in his name. We are to ask for greater works with no limit imposed on our asking. Verse 14 You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it.

The only requirement if you wish is that we ask in his name. Of course there is much that carries in terms of significance to ask in the name of Jesus.

Not just some kind of formula that will secure an answer but rather to ask in his name is to ask in a manner that is consistent with his character.

In accord with his will that brings glory to his person. In all of these ways we ask in his name. That is what we are to do.

We are to trust in him and our trust will be reflected in our asking of him for these greater works to be done. And what is Jesus' part?

[ 17 : 43 ] Well I think it becomes clear what his part is. He answers the prayers that we direct to him and he does. He hears from heaven and as he himself says and I will do whatever you ask in my name.

He will hear, answer and he will do. He promises to and indeed he identifies a supplementary reason. Not only being true to his promise which would be reason enough but also that in so doing he would bring glory to his father and I will do whatever you ask in my name.

Verse 13 so that the father may be glorified in the son. And so Jesus has every reason to answer the prayers of his people not only because he has promised to do so which as I say would be reason enough but in so doing he brings glory to the father which was his great and continues to be his great delight.

You know we think of the catechism and the first question and answer of the catechism and of course we think of it and we use it to apply to ourselves and rightly so. What is man's chief end? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever but of course that is true of Jesus.

Jesus saw as his chief end to glorify his father to delight in his father and so when disciples pray to Jesus trusting in him for his greater works Jesus delights in answering because he delights in attending to our requests but also he delights in bringing glory to his father.

[ 19 : 23 ] So really the encouragement to the disciples to whom he was speaking on this occasion and to us is that we ought not to fear failure. We ought not to contemplate giving up.

Don't be troubled in heart when you recognize and lay hold of this reality that Jesus hears from heaven. Jesus is near to us in heaven and he hears us from heaven when we come and ask him to help us do those things that he would have us do however seemingly impossible for us.

But then there's a third promise that Jesus gives. First of all we've noticed how he promises that he will be with his people in heaven. He will come back and they will be together that he will be near them from heaven and hear them hear us when we pray.

But then thirdly Jesus gives another promise to his disciples. Now in our case this is somewhat different because this is a promise that has already been fulfilled. At the time that he spoke recorded here this promise had yet to be fulfilled so it was something he was looking ahead to.

But the fundamental truth is still valid and relevant for us. And the third promise is this I'll send a gift to you from heaven. I'll send a gift to you from heaven.

[ 20 : 46 ] We notice there in verses 15 through 17 if you love me keep my commands chapter 14 verse 15 and I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate or another comforter another helper to help you and be with you forever the spirit of truth the world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him but you know him for he lives with you and will be in you.

So you have these wonderful promises that we've already identified this promise that Jesus will return and will bring us back to be with him. We have this promise that even in the present he hears and answers prayers that we pray in his name.

And these are wonderful promises but even in claiming these promises we need help. It's not always easy to look ahead to heaven and draw comfort from that.

It's not always easy to pray to pray believing and trusting even though we read the promise it's still difficult sometimes for us to lay hold of it. Perhaps easier to preach about prayer and believing prayer and trusting prayer or to listen to a sermon about it than it is to actually do it.

And Jesus knows that. And so he promises his disciples that he will send a gift from heaven to help them. And what is this gift? Well it is the Holy Spirit.

[ 22 : 15 ] He sends his Holy Spirit who helps us at each point that we have looked at. And of course for us that is a promise that has already been fulfilled. He already sent his promise in that pivotal historical way at Pentecost but then following on from that he has done the same for each of his people and we all as his people are indwelt by his Spirit.

And the Spirit helps us in all of these things that we've been considering. He helps us to believe and trust in Jesus. He helps us to grow in our faith and grow in our trust in Jesus.

He helps us to apply the truths that we're considering to our hearts and to our minds and to our own very particular and maybe confusing circumstances. He helps us to pray in the name of Jesus as we've been noticing.

He helps us to pray in a manner that is consistent with his character and in accordance with his will and that will bring glory to his name. In all of these things the Holy Spirit helps us.

He helps us to pray big prayers for greater works. And so in all of these ways the Holy Spirit has been given to help us to know and to claim and to believe the promises that Jesus gives.

[ 23 : 36 ] And so what we need to do this evening but perhaps something like this we probably need to do fairly regularly given the reality of how we are so easily confused and fearful and troubled.

We need to examine our troubled heart and hear the Lord giving us reasons to not be troubled to hear and to obey his words.

Do not let your heart be troubled. So listen to him now. Listen to him as he assures you I will be with you in heaven. I'm coming back and we'll be together.

Listen to him this evening as he says to you I hear you from heaven and I answer you from heaven and hear him as he reminds you that he has already sent a gift from heaven the Holy Spirit to indwells us and helps us in all of these things and we are grateful for it.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father we do thank you for your word. We thank you for the reality of what is described.

[ 24 : 47 ] We thank you that your people are presented as they really are and we can relate to the disciples. We know what it is to be confused. We know what it is to be fearful.

We know what it is to be troubled for so many different reasons and in so many different circumstances. We know what it is to be very concerned about what even tomorrow holds and how we will manage how we will handle what lies ahead and we thank you for the words of Jesus that were relevant and true when they were first directed to the disciples so long ago and are as relevant and as true and as trustworthy as we hear them directed to us.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. We do thank you for the end game. We do thank you for that wonderful and glorious prospect that inheritance that is ours that there is a day coming when Jesus will return and we will be with him for eternity as we dwell in a renewed heavens and earth.

We thank you that in the present in the here and now Jesus hears us and answers us and together with us accomplishes greater works and we thank you for your Holy Spirit.

We acknowledge that even as we pray we can do so only by his help and by his directing and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.