

“Peace in Troubled Times”
John 12:12-16, 27-28; 13:1; 14:1-4, 16-20, 27

The times we are living in are troubling times. Just a couple months ago, we may have felt relatively secure. But nothing seems certain anymore. The weeks before and the weeks ahead have caused many to be plagued by angst and uncertainty.

Jesus’ disciples also encountered a time of angst and uncertainty. They had come from various walks of life before they met Jesus. Maybe for some of them, life was good, and for others, not so much. But for those 3 years they spent with Jesus, life had been unparalleled! They’d seen countless miracles: calming the storm; feeding 5,000; raising the dead! They had spent the past years listening to the greatest teachings ever spoken.

And since the people were expecting a Messiah to overthrow the Roman gov’t and set up his rule in Jerusalem, the disciples were excited to be on the inside of the movement. Their week had begun gloriously with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem; people waving palm branches, shouting, *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!”* (John 12:13).

Up to this moment, the disciples had been savoring life with Jesus – rejoicing in what seemed to be unfolding. They had no idea that, in the very near future, all of their expectations & hopes would be shaken, dismantled. They had no concept of the crisis they were about to be put through, that Jesus would be arrested, mocked, beaten & crucified. [P]

Jesus, however, did know what was about to take place. Listen to John 13:1 again. This is one of the most beautiful under-quoted verses in Scripture: *“It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”*

This verse opens the longest dialogue of Jesus with his disciples in all 4 Gospels. When did it take place? Just days after his Triumphal Entry and just hours before his arrest, trial, torture and execution. And so, what does Jesus do in his final hours before experiencing the greatest suffering the world has ever known? Jesus begins to prepare *his disciples* for it! His words would help them face the trials that were about to come upon them. And our Savior's words help us face our own uncertain days as well! [P]

So ... they are in the Upper Room. Their Master has washed their feet ... He has shared the Passover Meal he had longed to share with them. He has proclaimed the New Covenant established through his blood & given them a precious way to always remember Him & His approaching sacrifice. He predicts Judas' betrayal. He predicts Peter's denial.

Can you imagine his heart at this moment? Filled with love and brokenness and burden – for those he had taken out of this world – those who had been by his side as the glory of God was displayed, as broken bodies were made whole, as bound souls were set free ... those whom he would now love to the end.

It is here in John 14, after the Passover Meal but before the Prayer in the Garden, it is here that we encounter an immensely pivotal and personal moment as Jesus chooses to comfort his disciples. John goes into great detail in these chapters. He zooms in like he has never done before. And how does it start? [P]

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, now trust in me” (Jn. 14:1). This is the foundation for finding peace in these tough times. It all hinges upon this one decision – a decision we each must make. Jesus calls out to us as well: *“Trust in Me.”*

Hear Phil. 4:6-7 *again* (NLT): *“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you*

will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

This verse tells us not to worry, but to pray. It doesn't say that if you don't worry but pray, God will instantly change all of your circumstances so there's nothing left to worry about. God often does change our circumstances. But if that's how it was every time, then when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Father would have said, "Okay, I'll make another way. You don't have to go to the cross." But that isn't what happened. There was no change in Jesus' circumstances.

And yet that prayer wasn't wasted. Instead, in that prayer, Jesus found the strength to do what was necessary – to go to the cross for you and me. It was His *trust* in the Father that led him to pray, "*Your will be done.*" He modeled what it means to *trust* in God, so that we too could find peace in troubling times.

But Jesus didn't just give them some abstract concept of trust and say, "Okay, trust me, bye." He knew that even if his disciples could trust him, it would be a limited trust. So, in his grace, he gave them more to go on. He gave them reasons *why* they could trust in him. And from those specific answers to that specific troublesome time, we discover how *we* can trust in God in *our* uncertain & troublesome times.

I. He is in control. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, it would have been easy to forget that God was in control. It may have looked very much like the Roman government or the Jewish leaders were the ones in control. Then again at the mocking, at the beating, at the sentencing, at the execution, and at the tomb – the disciples, filled with fear and confusion – wondering about the kingdom that was promised!

But Jesus explained to them beforehand that this was all a part of God's plan. He

explained that he had to leave them – all so that he could prepare eternity for them. In fact, it was *only* by his death and resurrection that they could experience the life everlasting. [P]

Sometimes in our lives the situation may seem hopeless. We may even question, “Where is God in all this?” We may wonder how anything good could possibly come of it. Many of us know the precious promise of Romans 8:28 – *We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*

But what about the verses that follow? “*What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ... Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is interceding for us! Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!* (8:31-37)

What a wonderful, hope-instilling promise! No matter what the enemy or this world throws our way, God is with us through it, and *nothing can impede his presence with us or his plans for us!* We wonder, “Why doesn’t He just stop the sickness ... cure the chaos?” Because He is accomplishing something of eternal worth through it all. We may not see right now what good is going to come from it, but that’s where *trust* comes in.

II. This won’t last forever. Jesus reassures his followers, “*I’m going away, but I’ll be back to get you*” (Jn. 14:2-3). He promises us that whatever trials we have to go through, they won’t last forever. You’ve heard the saying, “All good things must come to an end.” But the Christian’s worldview is different: All bad things must come to an end –

all evil and injustice, all sickness and suffering, all death and despair – will be obliterated for the one whose hope is found Jesus, Savior of the world!

Psalm 30:5 – *“Weeping may last for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”*

Right now, you may feel like circumstances will never change. You may feel like you’ve entered the never-ending-valley-of-the-shadow-of-death. But Jesus promises us: This won’t last forever. You may not yet see the light at the end of the tunnel. But you can set your eyes on your Redeemer.

Consider Job for a moment. He lost his herds, his house, his health, even his children. His wife told him to curse God and die. But then, we see the most intense trust of God’s deliverance. Job 19:25, *“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last.”* Job knew that no matter what he was going through now, he could endure it, because it wouldn’t last forever. As surely as his problem existed, one day his Vindicator would stand victorious! [P] Through Christ, we know that victory!

III. We have what we need. Jesus’ encouraging words continue – he tells them, *“You know how to get there”* (Jn. 14:4). Now the disciples didn’t even think they knew how to get there. They didn’t think they knew the way out of their coming trials. But Jesus explains that they knew *Him*, and He is the Way. He assures them that He would be sufficient for them.

Often, in times of uncertainty, it seems like something is lacking. But Jesus assures us, *“You have everything you need, as long as you know me.”* He doesn’t want us to simply know about him. He wants us to know him and love him personally, passionately. This only comes through an invested relationship. And it’s this invested relationship with Jesus that will get you through the hard times. I saw a sign that read: *“Relationship does*

what religion can't." If Christianity is just ritual for us, something we do out of a sense of duty or tradition, then we're going to give up in the hard times. But if your faith entails a lasting friendship with the living Savior, then that relationship will bring you through.

IV. We're not left alone. Jesus was about to leave his disciples. They had known the presence of Christ for 3 years, but very soon that would change. Surely that thought would make anyone anxious. But Jesus promised he would not abandon them. He hadn't spent those 3 years ministering to them just to throw them to the wolves and hope they would survive. Instead, he promises that he would send another "paraclete." John 14:16-17 – *"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to help you and be with you forever. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth."*

While Jesus needed to return to the Father, he would not leave them without the presence and power of God – so he promises to send them the Spirit of God – who would not be limited to time and space like Jesus was during the years he walked the earth. Imagine if Jesus was still here, but not the Holy Spirit. We would have to wait to schedule him about 300 years down the road. Until then, we could accomplish nothing. But now, we have the very Presence of God, everywhere at once, in the Person of the Holy Spirit. And this was made possible by Jesus leaving the earth.

Speaking of that, right before Jesus ascended to heaven, he said, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:20). How can that be? How can He be with us here and now if He is reigning in heaven? How can we experience His comfort, His wisdom, His guidance, His power? Because the Holy Spirit is the very presence of Christ here on the earth. Christ is still very present on this earth and very present in your life. [P]

Yes, we are living in troubling times... But we are not alone. We may be burdened

by confusion and concern, distress and disbelief ... but remember the promises of Christ – remember the power of His Spirit. Hebrews 13:5-8 says, “*Be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?’ ... Christ Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever!*”

We are able to find rest in the Lord no matter what the circumstances, no matter what trial or trouble comes – be it our life, our family, our church, our state, our country, our world – for God has promised us that He will never abandon us. In fact, He is at work in our circumstances; He is at work in our lives. He is drawing people in every part of the world to Himself.

It is the presence of Christ *with* you and *in* you that will help you to get through troubled times. This is why we can trust God in all things. Trust that *He is in control*. Trust that *it won't last forever*. Trust that *we have what we need* to make it through. And trust that *He will never leave us*. [P] May others see our deep trust in the Savior, so that they may trust in Him as well.

Amidst our troubling times, Jesus reassures us, “*I am leaving you with a gift—My peace I give to you. The peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't let your hearts be troubled or afraid*” (Jn. 14:27). May we remember His promises ... rejoice in His presence ... rely on His power ... and rest in His peace – to lead us through anything that comes our way. Put your trust in Him, now and always. Let's pray.

Benediction: “*May our God keep you firm to the end, blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the God who has called us into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our*

Lord, is faithful.” (1 Cor. 1:8-9)