

Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live
(The Gospel of John: *The Preparation and Passion of the Messiah*
***Birth of the New Testament Church - John 13-21*)**
John 14:1-3
Prescriptions for Troubled Hearts (Part One)

How is your heart doing these days? We have all heard the saying, “She died of a broken heart.” Well as we come to our text, the disciples’ hearts have been shaken, agitated, shattered and broken. They have just been through an emotional roller coaster ride reaching dizzying heights in the excitement of the triumphal entry only to be dashed when Christ announces that he will die and no longer be with them. They are confused; they are depressed, they are afraid. There was no place for a dying Messiah in their theology. He was supposed to come and to free them from the tyrant Rome and usher in a worldwide kingdom. What was all this talk about going away? How could he? They had forsaken all to follow him. And adding to all of this was Christ’s prediction that one of them would betray him and that Peter himself would three times deny his Christ. Now come the words, “*Let not your hearts be troubled.*” I wonder if any of the disciples were rolling their eyes. Even more, I wonder why they were oblivious to their Master’s pain. So consumed were they with their own pain that they had no time or no perception of his. But Christ, ever the Comforter, now seeks to console and strengthen them. And he does so by giving them several prescriptions for their troubled hearts (and for ours).

I. The Hope of a Heavenly Home - 14:1-3

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

1. It was promised by one who could deliver!

Believe in God; believe also in me.

Jesus is telling his disciples that they can cease being anxious and troubled. Why? Because he is God! They must trust in him in exactly the same way that they trust in God. They could rely on what he was about to tell them as coming directly from God. The promises that he would make, he would most certainly deliver. Yes, in some respects, in a very short time their life was going to fall in. Their sun was going to set at midday and their world was going to seemingly collapse in chaos around them. At such a time, there would only be one thing to do – they must stubbornly hold on to their trust in God. Since Jesus was God, he would know exactly how to deal with their troubling circumstances.

2. It is being prepared by one who can perfectly design.

² *In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*

Jesus now explains the reason why his disciples could stop feeling troubled with the thought of his leaving them. He was going to prepare a dwelling place for them in heaven. In Jesus day, it was customary for sons to add rooms to their father's house once married, so that the entire estate grew into a large compound centered around a communal courtyard. The image Christ may also have conjured up would be a Greco-Roman villa with numerous terraces and buildings situated among shaded gardens with an abundance of trees and flowing water. This would be much like the King James translation of a mansion in heaven. But the emphasis here is not only on the lavishness of heaven, but on the fact that we will be in close proximity - that is, the wonderful relationships that we will have in heaven.

Now it would be appropriate for us to stop for a minute and to think about the fact that Jesus is preparing a place particularly for you. Have you ever decorated a room for someone? If it was your son, the room might have airplanes, a train set, video games, or model cars. If it was for grandma it might have her favorite books, a recliner, and might be close to the playroom or her grand children's bedrooms. Now if we would do that for someone we love, imagine what care Jesus is taking in preparing a place for you individually. Imagine how he is personalizing it for you. God has built into every one of us the desire to have a genuine

place of our own, a home, a place where we belong, and know ourselves to belong.

But let's stop and think about heaven for a moment. When Jesus said that he was preparing a place, the Greek term refers to a physical location. Heaven is not a figment of the imagination or is it a feeling, a state of mind, or the invention of man. The Bible mentions heaven at least 500 times. It describes three distinct heavens: the atmospheric heavens, the solar system and galaxies as the second heaven, and the third heaven in which God manifests his presence fully. We do not know exactly where it is, but the Scripture speaks of it as being "on the farthest sides of the north (Isaiah 14:13) which might mean heaven is located in the north somewhere.

Further, heaven is not simply a place with puffy clouds and angels playing harps. **One person when hearing that 85% of Americans believe in heaven, replied "That's incredible. They think of heaven as quiet and peaceful, with no need to do anything. That sounds pretty dull to me. What do you do with all of that free time? And it goes on forever and ever?"** No, heaven is a place where we will be wonderfully, happily, excitedly employed serving the Lord in paradise. And we will be able to serve at 100% of the capacity that God has given us. Randy Alcorn has said, "What will it be like to perform a task, to build and create, knowing that what we're doing will last forever and ever? What will it be like to always be gaining skills so that our best work will always be ahead of us? Because our minds and bodies will never fade, because we will never lack resources and opportunity, our work will not degenerate. Buildings won't last for only 50 years and books won't be in print for only 20 years. They will last forever."

Heaven will never be boring! Why? God is not boring! He is the most powerful, relational, exciting, creative person that you could ever imagine multiplied a million times over! When we are in heaven every single task we perform will bring with it perfect satisfaction and reward. We will never engage in anything that leaves us feeling empty or dissatisfied. We will know what is like to be absolutely and totally fulfilled in every way.

You think Christian fellowship is good now, it is nothing compared to what awaits us. We will be perfectly compatible with each other in heaven and will for the first time enjoy fully the intimate fellowship that we have longed for in our hearts with not just one person, but everyone else there. And our fellowship will go beyond believers to fellowship with the angels and most importantly with Jesus himself. We will walk the streets of heaven and the hills and valleys of the new earth being able to communicate directly with the Christ who healed the sick, “loved on” the little children, bears the scars of nails on his hands and triumphantly rose from the dead. Imagine that! **One writer has said, ‘What is interesting to me is that we long for the presence of God now. My hunch is that you are already sensing something of God’s presence. Picture yourself walking around a shopping mall, looking at people in the window displays. Suddenly, you get a whiff of cinnamon. You weren’t even hungry, but now you really crave a cinnamon roll. This craving isn’t something you made up. There you were, minding your own business, when some drifting molecules of sugar, butter, and spice collided with the susceptible patch inside your nose. You had a real encounter with cinnamon, not a mental delusion, not an emotional projection, but the real thing. And what was the effect? You want more, now! So if you hunger to know the presence of God, it is because you have already begun to scent God’s compelling delight - that delight which will one day be satisfied and experienced forever.’**

And what about the heavenly city? It seems that this huge city will come down out of heaven and hover over the new earth or even rest upon the ground. Heaven’s capital will easily be able to house all of the people who have ever trusted in Christ. It will be 1500 miles wide, 1500 miles long, and 1500 miles high with more than 2,000,000 square miles on the first floor alone. Imagine gates made of a single pearl, foundation stones made of precious gems, streets of gold! Can you imagine approaching heaven’s capital from a thousand miles away? Imagine the dazzling brilliance of the light of God’s glory reflecting off the gates, the streets, the foundation stones, and the throne of God. The gold of the holy city will be so pure that it will not repel light the way opaque objects do; instead, it will absorb light and bathe in it. I imagine it will

look something like a gold hued pane in a stained-glass window. In this city, there will be no light post, no lamps, no flood lights, no electric lights for the light of God's glory will be the only light source needed. And, in this city there will be trees bearing twelve kinds of fruit and a river of life. The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations; meaning not that they would enhance our holiness, but that they will give us a greater sense of well-being, fulfillment, pleasure, and joy at being in the presence of God.

But before we go, we must say something about the worship. Can you imagine what a praise service that will be! Can you imagine millions of people singing in perfect harmony with instruments perfectly tuned in one glorious concert to God? One theologian has said, "Suppose God took you on a crystal ball trip into your future and you saw with indubitable certainty that despite everything - your sin, your smallness, your stupidity - you could have free for the asking your whole crazy heart's deepest desire: heaven, eternal joy. Would you not return fearless and singing? What can earth do to you, if you are guaranteed heaven? To fear the worst earthly loss would be like a millionaire fearing the loss of a penny - a scratch on a penny." And all this God has designed for you!

3. It is the place of our final destination.

³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

Jesus's departure would not be permanent. He would come again! This truth reflects the marriage custom of the bridegroom, who would go to the bride's house and bring her to her father's house, where an apartment would have been built for the new couple. What Jesus is saying is, "If I have spent all this time preparing a place for you, it only makes sense that I will come back and take you to that place where we can enjoy it together forever." You will be finally and forever home!

Conclusion:

If you have come today with a troubled heart, Jesus has some medicine for you. And his first prescription is the hope of a heavenly home. Another way to put it is that we have the hope of eternal life with him at our side. Christian hope is not about looking around at the state of

things now and trying to imagine where it's all going. It's not about trying to calculate the future from the present. It's about breathing *now* the fresh air of the ending, tasting the spices and sipping the wine of the feast to come - the feast of heaven!

Jeremy Begbie tells a story about attending a worship service in a poor South African Township. He was told that immediately before the service a house around the corner had been burned to the ground because the man who lived there was a suspected thief. A week before that, a tornado had cut through the Township, ripping apart 50 homes; five people had been killed. And then he was told that the very night before, a gang hunted down a 14-year-old, a member of the church's Sunday school, and stabbed him to death. The pastor began his opening prayer addressing God as the creator and the sovereign of the universe and asking why the wind came like a snake and tore our roofs off. He asked why a mob cut short the life of one of their own children when that child had everything to live for. He said, "Over and over again, Lord, we are in the midst of death." As he spoke, the congregation responded with a dreadful sigh and groaning, but as he finished his prayer, very slowly the whole congregation began to sing, at first very quietly, then louder. They sang and they sang, song after song of praise - praise to a God who in Jesus had plunged into the very worst to give them a promise of an ending beyond all imagining. They said that the singing gave the congregation a foretaste of the end of time, a foretaste of heaven. One writer reminds us that our world isn't a very good amusement park. No, it's a broken place groaning for redemption. Here is meant to make us long for forever. Here is meant to prepare us for *eternity.*" Into the depths of your anxious heart your Savior whispers, "Come take your medicine. I have the perfect cure for you. And it begins with casting all your cares on me. Why? I have a perfect future designed for you. I promise you a heavenly eternal home beyond your wildest dreams!