

The Gospel of John: A Troubling Statement for Troubled Hearts

Aaron Brockett | John 14:1-31

Alright, good morning and happy Daylight Savings day to you—you all should be in a good mood. And you are like, “What Daylight Savings time? We’re fine. This is the 9 o’clock hour, right?” It’s good to have you here.

If you happen to be visiting with us we’re glad to have you here, hope you feel welcome. My name is Aaron. I’m one of the pastors on staff. I’d love to get a chance to meet you sometime soon.

If you have a Bible, go ahead and grab it and get to John, chapter 14. If you don’t have a Bible, if you don’t own one, we give away free Bibles at Connection Central. On your way out you can grab one. I will throw some of these passages up on the screen.

If you smell a little bit of a funky odor in the air it’s because we had 2,500 middle school kids take over our building this weekend for CYI Super Start. So they had this place packed out. I want to thank all of our Rock Star volunteers for serving this weekend and not getting any sleep—not that I can imagine anyway. We love CYI. We love that whole event.

I just want to update you quickly. Last week, if you were here, Jake Barker threw out this challenge—at least on Saturday—the weather kind of messed with us last week. But we were looking for 100 people to sign up and serve at School 43 in our city. And, as of yesterday afternoon, the last number that I heard was that 115 of you have signed up. So, thank you for that. You guys exceeded our goal by 15 people. Thank you for the 15. That is awesome.

We are in John, chapter 14. We are working our way through John’s gospel. After Easter, we’re going to finish this up—sometime this year. There are 21 chapters and we’re in chapter 14. Here’s how I want to frame this up. I don’t know about you, but I am not a big fan of saying goodbye. How many of you like to say goodbye? The twisted, sick people in this room like to say goodbye.

Now, I’m not talking about, “Goodbye, I’ll see you later today.” I’m talking about, “Goodbye, I don’t know when I’ll see you next.” There is a difference between those two kinds of goodbyes. I’m not a fan of, “Goodbye, I’m not sure when I’ll see you next.” It just brings out feelings of loneliness, and insecurity, and fear. I’m not a very emotional person by nature, but when it comes to saying goodbye I get choked up.

Lindsay and I hadn’t been married very long, we’d been married maybe six months and I got hired—we were living in southwest Missouri—I got hired to be a preacher at a small church in a small town in southern Illinois.

So, we packed up what little we owned at the time, which wasn’t very much—I think it just took two vehicles and one six-foot trailer to pack everything that we owned at the time—and we moved to southern Illinois where we didn’t know anybody. We didn’t have any friends or family. The only people

we had met were the people at the church who we met on a couple of brief occasions when we had come to do the interview process with them.

Lindsay's dad helped us pack up and then he drove us to the new place that we were going to move into. And you know that moving is never very much fun. We arrived at the house, he helped us unpack everything. We're in boxes. He slept on the couch that night. He got up the next morning and he got back into his truck to head back to Missouri. We didn't want him to go. We were trying to stall him. We were trying to make excuses for him to stay. Finally he was like, "I've got to get on the road if I'm going to get back at a decent hour."

So he said goodbye to us, got into his truck, and drove away. And here we were in a strange town, in a foreign house, we didn't know anybody, and we watched our family member drive away until we couldn't see his truck any farther down the road. Any of you ever been there in that moment? You're living in a house of unpacked boxes, no phone is hooked up, and you don't have a television or anything. You don't know anybody and you can just feel so homesick immediately—you kind of feel like a foreigner.

Lindsay and I kind of stood there and we looked at each other and we were like, "What did we do? Why did we move to southern Illinois? Who lives here? What do you do here?" And we were like, "I think this was a mistake. Maybe he can come back." And so we did what any homesick, depressed couple would do in that moment. We got out of the house and we went to have lunch at a really, really bad Chinese buffet. I think it's an unwritten rule somewhere that sweet and sour chicken and Crab Rangoon will just kind of help you in your homesickness.

I don't like to say goodbye and I think this is the reason. When you say goodbye you're not really sure what is going to happen next. Any of you have a significant chapter like that in your lives? Maybe some of you just recently took kids off to college for the first time. You're like, "Man, where in the world did the time go? It feels like we just came home from the hospital and now we're taking our child to college." Maybe some of you have said goodbye to a family member who just moved away—or to a friend. And there are feelings of loneliness and uncertainty like, "What are we going to do now?"

If you have ever said goodbye, then you're in good company with the disciples in John chapter 14. In John 14, 15, and 16 John records the last extended conversation that Jesus has with His disciples, His friends. And in John 14 Jesus is saying goodbye. The disciples don't like it. The reason why—we have to understand this—is that for the disciples Jesus was home. Jesus was their Rabbi. Jesus was their mentor. Jesus was—I don't think He was old enough to be their dad—He was certainly old enough to be their big brother.

Jesus was about 33 years old at the time. Most of the disciples were 10 to 15 years younger than Jesus. They had left homes, and businesses, and families, and friends to follow after Jesus and their entire lives. Their entire identities were wrapped around and centered upon the person, around the ministry, around the life of Jesus.

Now, here's the thing that Jesus has been saying to these guys over and over again for three years: follow Me, follow Me, follow Me. And now, here in John 14, Jesus says, "Goodbye and you can't follow Me." It would have been totally disruptive to the disciples' thinking and to their peace of mind. They are like, "Jesus, what do you mean we can't follow You?" They didn't understand it.

Here's the thing. Jesus is a young man. They're thinking that they have their whole lives ahead of them. They're thinking that Jesus has come to introduce an earthly kingdom and they're going to have a front row seat to it. And they're like, "Jesus, we're just getting this started, Man. What are You talking about when You say You have to go away?"

Just like all of us, the disciples didn't like change. We don't like change. We like to kind of stay the same. And, as we study this together in chapter 14, judging by some of their responses the disciples were irritated. You might even say that they were a little angry about it. They were like, "Jesus, this doesn't make sense to us."

John, chapter 14 is for anyone in this room who has ever felt homesick. John, chapter 14 is for people in this room who have ever had to say goodbye before they were ready to. John 14 is for people in this room who have had life circumstances change on them and it felt like the carpet was being pulled out from under their feet. John 14 is for anybody who has said, "I feel like a foreigner in this world."

Now, I want to read through this passage, and I want to teach it, and then I want to pull out three words of encouragement. There is a whole bunch of stuff in here. I want to narrow it down to three things that Jesus says to encourage homesick hearts. I'm one of them and you probably are as well.

Look with me in your Bibles, chapter 14 starting in verse 1. Jesus says to these guys, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." Now, maybe a better way to translate, "Let not your hearts be troubled," would be, "Stop being troubled." Jesus is speaking to the troubled disciples who are already experiencing it. They are a little bit unsettled about the fact that He is getting ready to leave. But Jesus is also speaking to the trouble that they're about ready to experience.

Now, just one rule in Bible study. Whenever you read something and you want to know what it means, look at what comes just before it and what comes after it and you'll be able to discern, exactly, the meaning of what Jesus is talking about. And since we're diving into verse 1 of chapter 14, it would do us really well to back up a little bit to the end of chapter 13 and to look at verses 36 to 38.

Jake wasn't able to go that far into the chapter last week, but Jesus has a conversation with Peter that helps us to understand what verse 1 really means. If you look back up in your Bibles to that conversation that Jesus has with Peter, it's a really well known conversation. You're probably somewhat familiar with it even if you are somewhat new to Bible study.

Basically, Jesus said to Peter—the most passionate and enthusiastic of the disciples—He says, "Peter, I have to go away. You can't follow Me to where I am going but one day you'll follow Me there." And Peter says, "What do you mean I can't follow You to where You are going, Lord? I will lay down my life for You, Jesus. Man, I'll do anything for You, Jesus. I will charge hell with a water pistol for You. Just tell me where to go and I will do it." That's the kind of passionate guy that he was, which is why what Jesus says to him next would have troubled Peter's heart.

What does Jesus say to him? Jesus looks at Peter and I would imagine that He probably smiled somewhat of a warm, sympathetic smile and He just said, "Peter, do you realize what you are saying, bro? Do you really think you that you'll lay down your life for Me? I'm telling you the truth right now; you will deny Me three times before the rooster crows." That's another way of saying, "Peter, three times before the sun comes up, three times before the night is over, you'll lie and say that you never knew Me."

Now, that would have been deflating for a guy like Peter. That would have knocked the emotional wind out of him. Not to mention the rest of the disciples sitting around the table because they're going, "Man, Peter is the most passionate one of the bunch and if he can't stay true to Jesus, what hope do we have?" Already the storm clouds are beginning to appear in the disciples' hearts. Things are changing and they are troubled by it.

Honestly, I think that this is part of the reason why Peter overreacts in the Garden of Gethsemane when the Roman soldiers show up to arrest Jesus and Peter draws his sword and cuts off the ear of one of the soldiers by the name of Malcus. Do you remember reading that story, reading those verses? And Jesus bends down and picks up Malcus' ear and snaps it back on like a Lego block.

I have always been like, "Why was Peter so wound up?" I think the reason that Peter was so wound up is because of Jesus' words at the end of chapter 13, "You're going to deny Me three times before the sun comes up." And Peter is like, "No, I'm not." Then the first person to say something loses an ear.

Their hearts are troubled. Their hearts are going through all of this change and this flux and Jesus says to them in verse 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? 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. And you know the way to where I am going."

Now, these are great words of comfort here because there is something in the human heart—all of us are looking for a place. All of us want to know that we have a place. A place reserved, a place saved, somebody is expecting us, and somebody is waiting for us. And Jesus is saying to these guys, He's going to use this language here in a minute, He's going to say, "I've not left you as orphans." In other words, "I'm leaving but I'm not abandoning you," and there is a difference. "I'm not abandoning you, I'm leaving—but I'm leaving for a purpose. I'm leaving and My Father's house has many rooms and I'm going to prepare a place specifically with you in mind."

One of the things we have to understand is that when our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned they were kicked out of home and we've been homeless ever since. It's the reason why our bodies break down and get sick. It's the reason why our bodies physically die. It's the reason why circumstances often give us a bad day. It's why things hit us in the gut and take us by surprise—it's because we are homeless. We have never known what home is like. And now Jesus says, "I'm going to prepare a place for you. I'm preparing a permanent home for you and in verse 4 it says, "And you know the way to where I am going."

You have to love Thomas' response. Look at how he responds in verse 5, "Thomas," otherwise known as doubting Thomas—we're going to cover him on Easter weekend. He was the guy who said, "I'm not going to believe that Jesus walked out of a grave until I can touch the scars in His sides, and in His hands, and in His feet." And some of you really resonate with our boy, Thomas because Thomas is logical in his thinking. And Thomas says in verse 5, he listens to Jesus and he says, "Wait a second Jesus."

He says, "Lord we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" You have to love Thomas' honesty. He could have sat there, he could have listened to Jesus say, "You know the way to where I am going." And he could have been thinking, "Okay, if You say so Lord. If You say we know the way to where You are going, I guess I trust You." And Thomas is like, "Uh, time out Jesus. You have to be more specific than that."

It would kind of be like if I walked up to you right after the service today and said, “Hey, I have to take off. You can’t ride with me but I’ll meet you at the place. See you there.” You would be like, “Aaron, did you hit your head? You need to be more specific than that. You have to give us an address. You need to give us some coordinates. You need to give us a Google Map or something. You can’t just say that we know where you are going. We can’t read your mind.” In a very similar way, Thomas is like, “Jesus, You have to be more specific than that. We don’t know where You are going. We don’t even know what You are talking about right now.”

That is what prompts Jesus to say these words in verse 6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” In other words, Jesus is the address. Jesus is the coordinates. He is the way to God the Father. That’s the theme of John’s gospel. God become man, God in the flesh. Jesus didn’t just come to teach us a moral construct, He didn’t come to teach us a philosophy of ministry, He didn’t come to introduce a religious system, He came to be the very bridge that would bring us back to God.

He says in verse 7, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.”

Jesus says here that He is the way, the truth, and the life and I can’t think of a more unpopular truth or sentiment to exclaim in our culture today. That probably has to be the hot button issue, “Hey, man. It’s fine if you want to follow Jesus. It’s fine if you want to worship Jesus. Just don’t ever suggest that He is the only way. That is too exclusive. That is too narrow-minded.”

You need to understand that when Jesus says that He is the way, the truth, and the life He’s basically saying, “Don’t put your trust in a set of moral beliefs, don’t put your trust in a set of religious behaviors, put your trust in a person.” And the thing that sets Jesus apart from every other world religion and faith system is that it is grace based. It’s about God doing for you and me what you and I could never even begin to do for ourselves.

So when Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” He is not saying that other religious systems of belief are inferior, He’s saying that they are irrelevant. They are irrelevant to save because He is the only one Who can bridge that gap. He is the way to God the Father. You and I have broken that relationship with God and the only one Who can mend it back together again is Jesus Christ.

He says in verse 12, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do;” now I want you to pay attention here. I think that verses 12, and 13, and 14 are perhaps the most astounding things that Jesus says in this section of Scripture—we are about to read them. He’s says, “Whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do;” think about that for a minute. What have we seen Jesus do already in John’s gospel?

Well, we’ve seen Him turn water into wine. That was pretty amazing. How many of you have done that and you were entirely sober when you did it? Nobody. We’ve seen Him heal a royal official’s son from a

distance, we've seen Him say to a dead man, "Get up and walk." Not too bad. He says here, "If you believe in me you will also do the works that I do," alright, now come again Jesus, "and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."

In other words, I'm not going to be here anymore. I'm going to the Father. So you, as My agents who are left behind, you are going to do greater works. And I would circle "greater works" in your Bible. That is key to understanding what Jesus is saying and it will keep you from misunderstanding what He is saying, "...because I am going to the Father."

Verse 13, "Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in My name, I will do it." Now, please don't misunderstand. Jesus is not saying that He is a vending machine. He's not saying that He's your genie in a bottle that you can just ask Him whatever, "Dear Lord Jesus, allow me to sprout wings in Your name, Amen." Jesus isn't going to answer that prayer because the last part of that verse is the key to understanding this, "That the Father may be glorified in the Son." So, what in the world does Jesus mean by these words?

When I was a young man growing up in church and I read these verses they utterly confused me because I thought that what this meant was that I could have super powers like Jesus if I just believed enough. In other words, since Jesus walked on water—then I'll believe and I'll be able to moon walk on the water. Jesus was able to resurrect Lazarus from the dead—then I should be able to do something very similar to that. But Jesus is not talking about miracles and signs—the key to understanding this is in those two little words that I've already asked you to circle "greater works". That is a reference to the work of God in the lives of men and women that changes them for all of eternity.

Let me be even clearer. It's conversion. It's people stepping from darkness into light. And Jesus says that His primary work when He was here on the earth was not to dazzle people with miracles but to call them out of darkness and into light. And He says to His disciples and to us, "Now that I am going to the Father you are My agents now, you are My representatives, you are My ambassadors—you'll continue that work. You'll do exactly as I did. You'll even do it better.

That's astounding to me. I am like, "I'm not so sure about that, Jesus." But we have proof already in the Scripture. Here's what I want you to think about. Already in John's gospel, when Jesus stood up and He did a miracle, when Jesus healed somebody, when Jesus taught—what was the response to Jesus? What have we seen all through John's gospel? How many people responded to Jesus? How many people stepped out of darkness and into the light?

You guys are being a little bit quiet. I understand that it's Daylight Savings so let me go ahead and just throw this out there for you. Here's my guess. The response is about 50/50 at best. Did you notice the refrain all through John's gospel? Jesus would do a miracle, Jesus would teach, Jesus would show up and it would say—what was John's favorite phrase? He keeps coming back to, "Many didn't believe. Many wanted to get rid of Jesus. Many were trying to figure out how to arrest Jesus. But, many did believe." I'd say that it's about 50/50.

But nowhere do we have an amazing response. Like, Jesus stood up, He taught an amazing sermon and thousands of people gave their lives to Him. We don't see that in John's gospel. Here's the thing that I want you to notice. The very next book of the Bible that comes after John is the Book of Acts. Acts is the history of the birth of the church. We're actually going to study it together as a church family this fall.

And in the narratives of Acts Peter, our boy who has already denied Jesus three times, stands up in Acts, chapter 2 and he preaches a sermon. Guess how many people responded in one day? It was 3,000.

Hey, that's not too bad. I have not ever had that happen. I've had a few thousand people give me thumbs down but I've never had that large of a response. Two chapters later guess how many more people responded? It was 5,000. I'm not a math major but if I run those two numbers I think that's 8,000 people—8,000 people responded to Peter who was a fallen sinner, who couldn't say that he knew Jesus three times throughout one night, yet he stands up with wobbly knees, opens up this book, preaches a sermon and 8,000 people respond to Jesus.

And Jesus, Himself, in the flesh, never had that kind of response. That's astounding to me. All of a sudden these verses begin to make a whole lot of sense. Jesus says to us, His agents, He says, "Look, if you believe upon Me, now that I've gone to the Father, you're going to do as I have done. You're going to do even greater things than these."

Here's the implication for us as a corporate church body. What we read in the Scripture is not just about your individual application—there are certainly a lot of things that can apply to your individual life and I hope that they do, but there are some things that must, and can only, be applied corporately and this is one of them.

Together, as a church family, are we expectant that, with that same power, God will do what He did then today? That's why we are going to study the Book of Acts this fall. Here's one of my nagging fears that is always in the back of my mind as just one of the pastors around here—just as one of the shepherds around here, I don't want our church to fall asleep on the job.

I'm not talking physically, although this morning it could be physically, but I'm talking spiritually, I'm talking emotionally. I'm talking that it could be real easy to get into the routine where you get up, and you just drive, and you get to the service, and you get to your seat and you have the thing that you do as a routine—I'm not saying that in an accusatory fashion, I'm just saying that in a confessional fashion.

I know what that is like. I know what that feels like. Just to sleep walk into church and to say, "Well, we've sung this before and I know that he's going to do this over here and we've been in John's gospel 34 billion weeks, and we'll continue to be in this, and then we're going to this over here. And we don't come with expectancy.

How many of you woke up this morning and said, "God, I'm expectant that somebody might walk out of darkness into the light today?" See, one of the greatest challenges for the church is that we would be asleep on the job. There's a reason that Jesus is tarrying. There's a reason why we still have breath in our lungs. And it isn't to make our millions. It's to see that there would be more and more people come to know Jesus Christ.

Do you really believe the promise that Jesus said, "Hey, listen to Me, Peter. Listen to me, Brocket, you fallen sinner. You're going to do even greater things than I did because it's My power surging through you." I just get really fired up about that. The nine o'clock wasn't really fired-up either so I don't know what's going on. I guess it's in the delivery. I don't know.

Hey, look with me at verse 15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper," now notice that word—it's capitalized. He's talking about

Deity. He's talking about the Holy Spirit, "... even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans;" some of you need to hear that a second time. "I will not leave you as orphans. He has not abandoned you regardless of the circumstances that you are in. "I will come to you."

Verse 19, "Yet a little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." That's how salvation works.

Skip down with me to verse 25, "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled," there is a lot to be troubled by, don't let your hearts be troubled, "...neither let them be afraid. "You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming." That right there explains a lot. Any of you wonder about the silence of God? Jesus, where are You? Why don't You intervene? He just said here, "I will no longer talk much with you but I've given you the Helper, I've given you the Holy Spirit, there is a ruler in this world," He's talking about Satan, the one who is ranging around right now, wreaking destruction, twisting the truth but He says, "He has no claim on me,"

Verse 31, "...but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

Jesus is in His final moments with the disciples and this is what He chooses to talk with them about. I can't think of a more applicable thing to say to homesick hearts. You know the interesting thing about our study thus far in John's gospel is that the Holy Spirit really has not been mentioned—I don't even know if the Holy Spirit has been mentioned once—we're in chapter 14. There are 21 chapters in John. I think this is the first time that the Holy Spirit has been mentioned in the entire gospel. But in the next three chapters as Jesus is saying goodbye to the disciples, He mentions the Holy Spirit in every single chapter.

Jesus will even say something this astounding to them. In chapter 16 He will say, "You know what? It's better for you to have the Holy Spirit in you than for Me to be with you." That's an astounding thing. In fact, you even see this in the Scripture from the Book of Genesis, which is the first book of the Bible, all the way through the entire Old Testament and the first four books of the New Testament, which are the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—whenever you read about God and man, oftentimes the Scriptures will say it this way, "God was with man." God was with Abraham, God was with Joseph.

When you get to the Book of Acts there is a preposition change. No longer does it say, "God with us," anymore, it says, "God in us." God is in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. So, let me give you just three words of encouragement to homesick hearts that Jesus points out in this passage.

Here's the first one: Jesus is basically saying to us, "You are foreigners in this place. You are foreigners on earth. You are foreigners in your body and I am going to prepare a place for you." So, the implication

is—don't get too comfortable here. Any of you too comfortable in this life? Any of you too comfortable in your own body? Would it be the worst thing that could happen to you to have something mess up what you are doing right now in your life? That's an indication that you've become too at home here. Jesus says, "This isn't home. I'm going to prepare a place for you."

Last week I was reading an article written about Tokyo and the relationship between Japanese doctors and their patients. I read some really strange literature. I don't even know where that came from. It was really odd. But, it was interesting. Basically, in the article—this is dated 25 years ago so I don't know if there have been any cultural changes in Japan. The article was written by a western reporter and he was interviewing a Japanese doctor.

The Japanese doctor said that whenever they treat patients with terminal cancer, they never tell the patients what they are being treated for and usually the patients never ask. Now, think about that for a minute. If you were dying of some terminal disease and you went in to the doctor and the doctor was giving you some treatment—don't you think it might come up? Don't you think you might ask the question?

Apparently, in Japan doctors don't tell, patients don't ask. So the western reporter pushed him on it and asked, "Why, not?" This is what the doctor said, "You have to understand that, here in Japan, we generally do not believe in an afterlife so death is a harder thing for us to accept. So we just don't ask."

Now I would argue that that Japanese doctor doesn't understand western culture as much as he thinks he does because, although the Japanese may deny death by never asking their doctors about their condition, I would say that Americans deny death by suing doctors for their condition. That's a low grumble, right? You know it's true.

And the reason why is because it's not supposed to happen to us. We know it's coming. The mortality rate, last time I checked, was ringing in at a strong 100 percent. And it's never really dipped. We know that it is coming but it's not supposed to happen to us and it's not supposed to happen at that particular time. Death, and decay, and sickness are the things that we're all fighting against. Just look at the advertisements. We are a society that has never been more scared of aging and dying and yet in more denial of it.

One of the most common human needs is a place to call home. And Jesus says to the disciples—He offers this troubling statement to troubled hearts. He says, "Don't be troubled but you will be troubled." Now that just doesn't make a whole lot of sense. But what Jesus is saying is, "You're going to go through some troubling things. I never told you I would exempt you from those things."

Now, what were some of the troubling things that the disciples were about ready to experience? Well, number one, they were going to lose their Rabbi. They were going to lose their friend. They were going to lose their mentor. And then we go even farther. When Jesus said to these men, "Don't let your hearts be troubled," He was saying this to the very men He knew that within just a few months' or a few years' time they would be impaled on stakes while still alive, dipped in pitch and set on fire. And He says to them, "Don't let your hearts be troubled." How could He say such a thing? Well, this world was not their true home. That's the only way He can say that.

Look what it says in verse 23, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” That is astounding to me because I always used to think that I had to wave God down and get His attention down here. Like, “God, notice me. God, forgive me. God, grant me favor.” But Jesus just said here, “If anyone loves Me and keeps My word, We’ll come to him. We’ll make Our home with him.”

There is a guy by the name of Ernest Becker who wrote a book called *The Denial of Death* and he was not a Christian. But he writes that the reason why we deny death or resist death so much is primarily that we do not like the idea that we are not in control. To modern people, the thing that makes life meaningful is choice. The thing that makes life meaningful is options. The American way is nobody has the right to tell me how to dress, to think, behave, or believe.

Here’s the problem with death. Death doesn’t care. Death never asks this question, “What do you think? Is now a good time?” Death doesn’t negotiate. Death doesn’t ask our opinion and so we deny it and we resist it. And the irony of life is that you and I will spend countless hours in preparation for things that we are never sure will happen. But the one thing that we know will happen—many of us are not prepared for.

Maybe just a case and point would be retirement. I’m not anti-retirement. And if you’re working toward retirement, if you want to retire and enjoy that time of your life—man, more power to you. But here’s the thing. James would even say this, “Why are you toiling, why are you working for these moments in your life when you are not even sure that they’re going to happen?” But the one thing that you know for sure is going to happen is that this body is going to give out and your soul will live forever and you’re not quite sure where it will reside.

Jesus is basically saying, “Don’t get too wrapped up in the here and the now. Look at your body for a minute. This is Motel 6. That’s about as good as it gets. And it’s temporary. And He’s gone to prepare the eternal and the real for us.

Here’s the second thing Jesus would say to homesick hearts: I have your back. I have your back. Jesus doesn’t say it that way but that’s essentially what He says in 1 John, chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. He says, “My little children. I’m writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.”

Man that could be the summary for the entire Bible right there, “I’ve written this whole book so that you won’t sin but you will. And I want you to know that when do I have it.” This is one of my favorite words in the Scriptures, “You have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” The word “righteous” means that Jesus will do what is right and He will make things right, and He is the propitiation—that’s just a fancy word for full payment, the full payment for our sins.

Now, here’s what you need to understand. Around here we use the word “gospel” an awful lot and the word “gospel” is just shorthand for Good News. Really, really good news that God is righteous, that God is just, and that He has made full propitiation for our sins. Man, that is awesome news. You can be free from that.

But here’s the thing. Good news is never good news until you have a grasp of the bad news. The problem is that the bad news is so stinking offensive. We don’t want to hear the bad news. But you have to understand the bad news, you have to feel the weight, and the depth, and the pressure of the bad news and say, “Oh, my goodness. That’s relief.” The Good News is really good news.

The bad news is that you are not as good as you think you are. The bad news is that you and I are darkened, wretched sinners. We can't even trust our own impulses and emotions. We stand before the judgment seat of God condemned. And there isn't anything we can do, or say, or work off, or pay it off. That's the really, really bad news.

Now, the human, darkened, fleshly side of us that resists that, that kicks against that and says, "I don't think I like that so much. I mean, Aaron, I know that I'm not a perfect person but I don't know about being a darkened sinner. But, here's the thing. Every time I turn on the news I see evidence of the darkness of the human spirit. I see injustice all over the world—stuff that literally enrages us. We have to ask ourselves this question, "Where does all of that injustice around the world come from?" And the answer is that it comes from my heart.

If there is any hope for the injustices in the world to be rectified, there has to be a pure and righteous judge and we all have to stand before Him. Here's the thing that John tells us. He says, "We have an Advocate in Jesus Christ." That's another way of saying that we have a defense attorney.

Jesus is standing before God the Father even right now—that's what I meant by He has your back—and if your faith, if your trust, if your life is hidden in Christ He is advocating for you before God the Father even as we speak. If you were to keep record of the rebellion of your sin, if I were to keep record of mine, starting as soon as the service ends until the time we gather next weekend it would be a list as long as our arms. And Jesus is advocating for every single one of those things.

Now here's the thing, when I was a younger man that didn't mean too much to me. When I was a younger man I would think about Jesus standing before God the Father and arguing my case like He was my defense attorney trying to get me acquitted. And I kind of imagined that the conversation went like this, "Alright, we're here to judge Aaron Brockett."

Jesus stands up and He says, "Yes. This is Aaron. You created him. You kept him alive every minute. He owes you everything but he gives you very little credit. He should be building his entire life around you God, but he isn't. He is filled with pride. He is a greedy, selfish individual. He has lustful thoughts all of the time.

"But, God, I'd just like to ask you to consider the fact that he's had a really bad week. And he didn't receive enough nutrients as a kid. I think he played a little too close to the microwave. He didn't wear a bicycle helmet. He got into a few accidents. Kids teased him at school. God, I just ask if maybe you'd let him off today. God, could You cut him a break?"

That's how I kind of imagined that that went down. And it didn't work for me for this reason. I knew the extent of my sin and I wasn't going to give up anytime soon. And I thought, "How long can Jesus keep that up? How long can He continue to go and exhaust the system?"

But, I want you to know that that is not what the Bible teaches about Jesus' representation. Jesus is not in heaven garnering sympathy from God on your behalf. The conversation goes more like this. God the Judge stands up and Jesus says, "Yes, this is Aaron Brockett. He is guilty as sin. He's an idiot. There isn't even any question, God. The dude is clueless. He doesn't get it. He's failed in every way, continually, and Your law says that he deserves condemnation. Your law says that the only way that these debts can be paid is through blood sacrifice and a death. And here it is. I made payment for it already, God. It's stamped in full."

And then Jesus says this, “God, because You’re a Judge who is just, Your justice will never allow You to accept two payments for one debt.” Friends, that’s the gospel. Jesus made full payment on behalf of your life and yet you’re still trying to pay God off with two different payments for one debt.

We call that religion and it’s futile and it will burn you out, and it will disillusion you to the point where you are like, “I just don’t know that I can earn God’s affection. I don’t know that I can throw enough into this bank account.” And Jesus basically said, “The only way that your heart will be transformed is when you accept that one and final payment and you begin to interact with Me as your Savior.”

See, here’s the problem. Many of you in this room are just treating Jesus like a model or an example to follow but you’ve not yet made Him your Savior. I’m going to say something that’s going to sound really funny to your ears. Jesus is a horrible model to follow. Does that sound weird? Does that sound sacrilegious? Some of you are like, “Honey, get your things. I think we came to the wrong church today.”

Do you remember a few years ago those bracelets WWJD? Remember what that acronym stood for? What would Jesus do? Not a bad question to ask. The problem is that if He’s not your Savior then it’s an impossible thing to ask. There’s no way that you can do as Jesus did until He has paid the price for your sins.

See, here’s the problem with religion. Here’s the problem with coming to church today because you think that God will see you today and somehow you will be justified in His eyes. Jesus has just become your model. He’s yet to become your Savior. And when He’s only your model His model crushes you. You can’t live up to it, man. Jesus has to become your Savior. Jesus says, “I have your back. I am your Advocate. Why are you still trying to pay off a debt that I’ve already paid? You won’t find freedom in that.”

Here’s the third word of encouragement that Jesus gives to homesick hearts: He has sent us now another Advocate. You could say that the Holy Spirit is the second Advocate. In the ESV translation that we just read from it said that the Holy Spirit is the Helper. But in other translations of the Bible they call the Holy Spirit: Counselor, Comforter, Strengthener, Encourager. When you have that many different words attempting to relay the meaning behind one Greek word you know that that one Greek word is so rich in meaning that one English word isn’t enough to cover it. That’s what I love about that.

The Bible has so many words for the Holy Spirit. Here’s the literal Greek word for the Holy Spirit, “Paraclete”. It is taken from two Greek words. You pull them apart—“para”, which means to come along side, and “colegio” which means to speak a message of truth. That’s the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes up alongside and speaks the message of truth.

So here’s the thing. If you are in Christ the reason is not only because of your grandma who was faithful and who took you to church when you were growing up. The reason that you’re a Christian is not because you opened up a Bible and started reading and you came to the conclusion on your own. It’s not because a friend shared with you the gospel message. The reason that you are in Christ is because the Paraclete came alongside and spoke a message of truth into your heart and enabled you to respond.

So, here’s the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to us in a still, small voice—it’s not your conscience, it’s the Spirit of God and it convicts and every time you resist it you grow harder to it to the point that you can no longer hear it anymore, which is the reason why, when you hear that still, small voice of the Spirit you should respond to it because when you reject it your heart becomes harder and harder toward it.

J. I. Packer says that the Spirit of God is like a floodlight. Any of you ever taken one of those big floodlights that you get at Costco and shine it in a field? You turn that thing on and you can't see the floodlight you can only see what the floodlight is illuminating. And J. I. Packer says that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit says, "Look at Jesus. Look at His word."

I get this question a lot, "How do I know that I have the Holy Spirit within me? Do I need to look different? Do I need to speak in a different kind of tongue? How do I know when I have the Holy Spirit?"

Here's how you know. You develop an insatiable appetite for God's word in a pursuit of Jesus Christ because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The way you develop an appetite for God's word is when the Spirit comes alongside you and begins to speak a message of truth. If you have no appetite for God's word, if you have no interest at all in following after Jesus, it's a pretty good indicator that the Holy Spirit has not yet taken up ownership within the residency of your heart. See, an advocate is somebody who comes in their power and represents those who are powerless.

Here's what I want leave you with. Are any of you too at home in this world right now? Would you say, "If God took something," that could be a relationship, that could be a career, that could be a financial standing, that could be a role, or a title, or a position, "...if God took that from me it would spin me out of control." Friends that is an idol and it is temporary and you need to hand it over to Him.

Jesus says to us, "You're going to face significant storms in your life. Don't be surprised when you face moments, when you face circumstances that will trouble your spirit. Take heart. I have overcome the world. Don't let your heart be troubled because I've gone to prepare a place for you because this place is not your home. I have your back when you fall into sin. Hide your life in Me. And I've given you a helper Who will come up alongside of you." The question is; are we going to choose to live our lives in the power of that Spirit or will we continue go and live in our own power?

Let me pray for us as we respond to this morning. We're going to take communion together. We're going to sing a couple of songs. We will have baptisms line up. We've been celebrating all weekend. And I just want to ask that the Spirit of God would come into this place right now and meet us where we are.

Father, we come to You now and we know that right now, in this room, there are those of us who may have been following after Jesus for a while but the human heart has a tendency to drift back to that from which we have come. We have a tendency to drift back into religious behavior. We have a tendency to drift back into trying to earn Your affections and to earn our right standing in Your eyes. And, God, I pray that this was a really good reminder of what it is that You have called us away from and called us to.

Father, if there are some people here who, maybe for the first time today, would feel the prompting of Your Holy Spirit, that they'd be willing to step out of darkness into the light, and that they'd be willing to trust that You are Who You say that You are and that You will do what You say that You will do.

God, I know that this is probably something that every single person in this room can say, "Yep, I'm troubled. My heart is troubled over this. I have to go to a meeting this week. I'm troubled over it. I have to have a conversation this week. I troubled over it." God, I pray that we would remember our true home and our true residency and that we would call upon the Helper, the Advocate, the One Who will come alongside of us and speak a message of truth into us that will calm our spirits and that will give us courage and give us wisdom as we seek to represent You in a world that is dying and facing a Christ-less eternity.

God, the world will say that everything that we have talked about today is crazy, it's insane. We know that it is the only thing that is real and eternal. Give us the strength to follow after You now as we respond in communion and worship. May Your Name be glorified. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.