

INTRODUCTION:

Some of you might agree with me that one of the worst things about having a nightmare is not knowing how it ends.

- I remember doing some reading about dreams a number of years ago, and you may be aware of this already, however studies found that many people wake up before most bad dreams come to an end.
- I used to be afraid of heights and I used to have a recurring nightmare about falling.
- I would feel like I was falling, and falling, and falling, and it was absolutely terrifying.
- I would be able to see the ground getting nearer, and nearer, and nearer and then BOOM!!—I would wake up, just before hitting the ground.
- Well... sort of... I would usually wake up on the floor having fallen out of bed.
- However, there are few things that upset us more than not knowing the end of a story.
- This is why we usually pay the extra dollar to keep the movie an extra night if we don't get it started soon enough... We "have to" know how it comes to an end.

This morning, I would like for us to study a few verses from **John 14**, but to understand what happens, we really need to go back and just briefly review what happens in **John 13**.

- **John 13** is a rather disturbing chapter of the Bible.
- **John 13** is set on the evening before Jesus' death on the cross.
- At the beginning of the chapter, we find that the Devil had entered the heart of Judas.
- Peter tried to stop Jesus from washing his feet, and there is a rather disturbing conversation that took place at that point.
- Later in the chapter, Jesus predicted that one of the disciples would betray Him later in the evening, and when we get to **verse 30**, we see that Judas got up and left.
- And then, near the end of **John 13**, Jesus says that he is about to leave (referring to His death), and that where He is going, they will not be able to come.
- And then, as the chapter closes, Jesus predicts that Peter would deny Him three times.
- So, at the very least, **John 13** is a rather disturbing chapter, and we do not have the end of the story.

The disciples had come to love and trust the Lord, they finally understood that He was the Messiah, but right here at the end, it seemed like everything was about to unravel.

- Everything seemed to be falling apart.

In the coming chapters, Jesus would explain that most of the disciples would be persecuted, and that they would also die for their faith.

- Some of you may know that Woody Allen has said that he didn't mind dying, he just didn't want to be there when it happened.
- I would imagine that most of us would admit at least a little anxiety about dying, and by the time we get to the opening verses of **John 14**, the disciples are in the middle of that conversation.
- Let's read together what Jesus had to say to them... **John 14:1-6**...

1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

- 3 *“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*
- 4 *“And you know the way where I am going.”*
- 5 *Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?”*
- 6 *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

As we study this paragraph of Scripture, I would like for us to look back at four of the encouraging statements that Jesus made—as we apply these statements to our lives today.

I. First of all, though, we notice in **verse 1** that Jesus said, **“DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED; BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME.”**

It is so easy to take our eyes off of Jesus and focus on whatever is going on around us.

- Up in Chicago there is an all-news radio station (WBBM) that I used to listen to a lot and I was actually listening to this radio station when the Trade Towers were attacked back in 2001.
- But this station had all of the latest news—most of which was bad—all of the traffic accidents, and shootings, and the reports from various wars around the world.
- After a while of listening to the station, I started to realize that that it isn’t healthy to listen to so much negativity.
- Today, rather than listening to that, I have a number of cassettes of Acapella music in my office that I will occasionally listen to instead.
- With so much information available in the world around us, though, it is so easy to only focus on the negative.

The same thing is true in our personal lives.

- Perhaps we feel at times that our lives are falling apart.
- Perhaps we are worried about a member of the family.
- Perhaps we are worried about bills.
- Perhaps we are worried about our marriage.
- It is possible to focus on the negative to the point where the focus itself is destructive.

I think we also realize that the same thing can also happen in the church.

- Just like in our personal lives, and in our families, and as with any other organization that is made up of imperfect human beings, it is also possible for our focus to shift from the positive to the negative.

Jesus is saying here in **John 14:1**, that we need to refocus our attention on Him.

- Jesus said, ***“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”***
- Was Jesus saying that it is always a sin to ever be troubled?
- If we were to go back and read a few of the previous chapters in **John**, we would find at least three times when the Bible says that Jesus Himself was ***“troubled.”***
- In fact, one passage (When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead) the Bible says that He was ***“deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.”***
- So we go back to the original grammar in **John 14:1**, and we find that Jesus actually said, ***“Stop letting your hearts keep on being troubled.”***
- Jesus, therefore, was referring to a constant state of worry or negativity.
- We are not to allow our troubles and concerns to overtake our lives, but we are to always focus our attention on Jesus.

I think most of us have had the experience of living near some landmark.

- The farm that I was raised on had a long driveway—Probably close to 120 or 130 yards.
- Well along that driveway were seven Norway Pine trees that stood between 80 to 100 feet tall.
- Those trees were well above the rest of the tree line and they could be seen from a number of miles away.
- When we were on our way home from a long trip, it was always a welcome sight to see those trees.

In a similar way, Jesus is the landmark in our Christian faith.

- We remember the opening words of **Hebrews 12:2**, where the author refers to “*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.*”
- In times of trouble, then, whether it is trouble in our personal lives, or trouble in our families, or even trouble with our Christian brothers and sisters, the Bible tells us to put our hope in God, and not to get burdened down in those troubles.

II. There is a second statement of encouragement here in **John 14**. Jesus said, “**IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY DWELLING PLACES.**” In other words, **JESUS GAVE THE PROMISE OF HEAVEN.**

He was continuing to encourage His disciples, and He reminded them that all of the disciples had reserved rooms in His Father’s house.

- Some older translations use the word “*mansions,*” and it is so fun to sing about “*mansions,*” and yet it might bring across a different picture than what Jesus might have originally had in mind.

Most of the language scholars will tell us that it might be better translated as “*dwelling places*” or “*rooms.*”

- In the ancient world, people often lived in several small rooms arranged around a courtyard.
- Whenever a son would get married, the father would simply build on another room.
- And so Jesus is not emphasizing the idea of a “*mansion,*” as a huge fancy house, but He seems to be emphasizing the fact that the disciples would be welcomed into heaven as their home—as they would be welcomed to a giant family reunion.

My earthly father has a house near Warren, Minnesota.

- I know that I am always welcome there.
- In fact, if I had a friend passing through Northern Minnesota, and if I told my friend that he would be welcome in my father’s house, I know that my father would honor that invitation.
- In a similar way, Jesus was offering an invitation on behalf of His Father in heaven.

I believe that only when we get to heaven will we truly understand how hard it must have been for the Bible writers to describe what is waiting for us.

- Even in the brief history of our own nation, the steam train was originally called the “**iron horse.**”
- The first car was called a “**horseless carriage.**”
- Back in 1984 the First Apple Macintosh computer was invented.
- Twenty six years ago, how would we have described a computer to someone who had never seen one before?
- We would try to explain that it was a cross between a typewriter and a television, and yet even that would not really explain what a computer is.

In a similar way, the Bible writers have had a hard time telling us what to expect, and for that reason, the Bible uses many different words to describe heaven.

- Sometimes it is referred to as a *“country,”* indicating its huge size.
- Sometimes it is referred to as a *“city,”* indicating the number of inhabitants.
- Sometimes it is called a *“kingdom,”* indicating that there is some kind of governmental structure to it all.
- Sometimes it is referred to as *“Paradise,”* indicating its great beauty.
- But here in **John 14**, Jesus refers to heaven as His *“Father’s house.”*
- It is another way of describing heaven as our HOME.

Home itself is a very peaceful word.

- Home is where we can go to relax.
- Home is where we can take off our shoes and unwind.
- Home is where we go to calm down and let go of the cares and troubles of the world.
- Home is a peaceful place, and the thought of going home should encourage all of us who are here this morning.

III. There is a third encouraging statement in this paragraph, and that is, **JESUS PROMISED TO RETURN**. Jesus said, *“IF I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU TO MYSELF, THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO.”*

Let’s remind ourselves that this statement was made on the night before the crucifixion.

- These men had been with Jesus for more than 3 years, they were close friends, and Jesus had just finished explaining that they would see Him no longer.
- In these verses, then, as a way of offering encouragement to all of us, Jesus promises to return and personally bring us to our home in heaven.

Two times in two verses now, we have seen this idea that Jesus is leaving in order to *“prepare a place for us.”*

- When I was younger, I had this idea that heaven wasn’t quite done yet—perhaps that the trim work wasn’t done, or maybe that the carpet hadn’t been laid.
- And so Jesus had to go to heaven to finish the work, and make the beds, and do the final cleaning...and then heaven would be ready.
- However, now that I am old and wise—I think I understand that the preparation has more to do with the road to heaven than heaven itself.
- Jesus Christ prepared the way to heaven.
- Jesus made a trail where there had not been a trail in the past.

Sometimes we sing the song, *“The Way of the Cross Leads Home,”* and I think it summarizes the way it is for us, but on another level, the way it was for Christ as well: **“I must needs go home by the way of the cross: There’s no other way but this. I shall ne’er get sight of the Gates of Light if the way of the cross I miss.”**

- Jesus was preparing the way to heaven by giving His life on the cross.
- As Jesus said earlier, in **Matthew 16:24**, *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”*

In **Hebrews 10:20**, we read about the *“new and living way,”* which Jesus inaugurated for us through his blood.

- The blood of Christ, therefore, prepared a way for us to go to heaven.
- Jesus is comforting His disciples, then, by reminding them that what they were about to witness in the next 24 hours was necessary to make heaven available.

- He was leaving in order to prepare a place for them.
- He reminded them that He would then return and personally take them to that home in heaven.

IV. There is a fourth statement of encouragement that Jesus offered to his disciples here in **John 14**. It comes in **verse 6**, as Jesus said that **THERE IS A WAY BEFORE US**. Jesus said, ***“I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME.”***

Notice, Jesus did not say...

- I will show you the way to heaven.
- Find your own way to heaven.
- Trust your heart to get you to heaven.
- Look inside yourself for the way to heaven.
- The way is whatever you want it to be.

But Jesus said that He, Himself, is the one and only way to the Father in heaven.

- In fact, Jesus was so strong in this teaching, that the early church was actually known as ***“The Way.”***
- Over and over again in the New Testament book of **Acts**, we read about ***“The Way”*** as a description of the early church.
- In **Acts 9**, before he became a Christian, Paul had letters from the Jewish leaders, so that if he found anyone belonging to ***“The Way,”*** that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- In **Acts 19**, some were speaking evil of ***“The Way”*** in Ephesus.
- Later in Ephesus, we read that there was ***“no small disturbance concerning the Way.”***
- In **Acts 24**, the phrase is mentioned twice in Paul’s defense before Governor Felix.
- The Bible says that Felix had ***“a more exact knowledge concerning the Way.”***

The early church, therefore, was known as ***“The Way.”***

- This should not surprise us, because Jesus himself also said in **Matthew 7:13-14**, ***“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”***
- The word translated ***“way,”*** is from a word which means ***“road.”***
- Jesus Himself, then, is the road to the Father.

Without Jesus, we are not on the way to heaven, but we are lost—in the middle of nowhere, with no map to find our way home.

- We think about a lost dog, a lost ring, a lost wallet, or even a lost child.
- All of these things make us upset, but consider the tragedy of a lost soul!
- Without Jesus, there is no bridge; there is no road to heaven.

This is a concept that can hardly be understood in our culture today.

- Some time ago, I read the results of a Gallup survey that was made sometime after 9/11.
- The good news is, 87% of American teenagers believe that Jesus was a real person who came to earth.
- 65% want a close relationship with God, and 84% say that God is personally involved in people’s lives.

But the bad news is this: 63% also believe that Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, etc., all pray to the same God.

- 58% believe that all faiths teach equally valid truth.
- And 70% of teens agreed with this statement, **“You can tell if something is morally right by whether it works in your life.”**
- Our society has trained our children to believe that one way is as good as another.
- And yet the Bible reminds us that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

SUMMARY:

The disciples were discouraged, and we have found here in **John 14** that Jesus gave them four very encouraging reminders.

- **First of all**, they were to keep themselves focused on God. They were not to allow themselves to be distracted by various discouragements.
- **Secondly**, that we have a home waiting for us in heaven. The Son has invited us into the Father’s house, and we have a home in heaven.
- **Thirdly**, that Jesus will return to personally bring us to that home. Jesus prepared the way to heaven through the cross, and He will bring us there at the proper time.
- **And finally**, that there is a way set before us. Jesus Himself is the road to heaven. The road is narrow and rough, there are many discouragements that may pull us to one side or the other, but the reward is worth it in the end.

CONCLUSION:

I know that when I read this passage, I can hardly wait to get to heaven!

- Our Father is there. Our Savior is there. Our home is there. Our names are written there.
- Our hearts are there. Our inheritance is there. Our citizenship is there.
- In fact, when we think about it, what in the world are we doing here?
- There is actually one main thing that we can only do here that we can’t do in heaven, and that is, we can invite people to join us on the Way.

INVITATION:

The Bible says that to have our sins washed away, we must believe in Jesus, change our lives, and allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins.

- If you would like to join us on the Way, we invite you to obey what the Lord has told us to do.
- If you are ready to do it right now, you can let us know while we sing the next song.
- Let’s stand and sing...