

I AM: The Way and the Truth and the Life

John 14:1-11 (EHV)

¹ "Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am. ⁴ You know where I am going, and you know the way." ⁵ "Lord, we don't know where you are going," Thomas replied, "so how can 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, except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you would also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ "Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that is enough for us." ⁹ "Have I been with you so long," Jesus answered, "and you still do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I am telling you I am not speaking on my own, but the Father who remains in me is doing his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. Or else believe because of the works themselves.

"Dear children, I am going to be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come." (John 13:33) The silence is broken by Peter: "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you!" (John 13:37) Jesus responds, "Will you really? What you will do is deny me three times by the morning."

Can you feel the air forcibly pushed out of you, the sickness to the stomach like you were just punched in the gut? Jesus, your teacher and constant companion for 3 years, the miracle worker, the comforter, the one who controls the winds and the waves, the Messiah, your Savior, he is leaving you. You desperately try to hang on, like Peter did, only to be told you will deny him, not die for him. The disciples' familiar world is rocked and shattered. What could be more troubling to their hearts?

Maybe you're feeling the same kind of gut punch right now. Your familiar world has been rocked and has gone away. I can't go to church. I feel distanced from my brothers and sisters in Christ. Where is my help? Where is my God? Is your heart troubled with these thoughts?

As a pastor, I find myself in a weird, troubling place. Week after week, I pray with my family on Saturday nights that God would bring so many people, all the people, to our church so that they can hear the lifesaving message that only the Great I AM gives. We even had started that Great Multitude Challenge back at the end of February in the hopes of building up the body of Christ with previewing the great heavenly multitude of saints like what the Apostle John saw in his vision by having everyone here at church as often as possible. Now the doors are locked on Sunday mornings. It's vacant, empty, as you and I worship from home. People ask to come, long to come. Right now, I tell them no – even in moving from red to orange risk levels in Utah.

This troubles me as a pastor who constantly encourages people to come and worship and be filled up with God's Word and invites people to our church to build each other up in Christ. While we worship online, I long to be with you in person. I long to give you the Lord's Supper. And I hate telling you not to do this the way the church has done it for thousands of years. And I have to ask myself the questions: Am I doing the right thing? Am I hurting you spiritually? My heart is troubled as our familiar world is gone.

I know many of you have troubled hearts over the fact that we are not meeting in person right now. And then there are all those other familiar things that are gone right now. Social butterflies can't be around people like they used to. Kids are home not just 3 months for the summer but have already been home for 2 months and will be home for 4 more months, probably. You can kind of go out to eat, but you can't step foot into the restaurant (which has led to some interesting tailgating in the back of our van by our family). You can't just walk over to the playground at the nearby park because it's still roped off with caution tape. You have had to reschedule how to get your groceries, what actions you take when you get your groceries. You are now working from home with all the distractions that come from doing so. (Hopefully, you are not as easily distracted as I am.) Or your job has gone away – cut, laid off, furloughed. Now you're searching, wondering what to do next, learning what unemployment is all about. When can we go back to normal? Can we even go back to normal? Our hearts are troubled.

With our hearts being troubled, we ask something of God like Philip did that night: "Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough for us." (verse 8) Give us a sign, God. Give us something to hold on to, something to calm our troubled hearts!

Jesus knows that your hearts are troubled. How can he not? He is the Great I AM. He knows all things. He knew that night before he went to the cross, before he was betrayed and denied three times, that the hearts of his disciples were troubled. While Jesus could

certainly have been consumed with thoughts about what he would go through in less than 24 hours, he is instead filled with compassion and concern for his disciples. He's not just thinking about them, having them in his thoughts and prayers. He actually brings peace to their troubled hearts. He does the same for us, knowing what's on our hearts and minds as he gives the antidote to a troubled heart, no matter the circumstances: "Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." (verse 1) The antidote is to believe in God. Believe what?

Believe that "in my Father's house are many mansions." (verse 2) That's cool, Jesus, but why does that matter? It matters to us and our troubled hearts because here Jesus is talking about a permanent dwelling place. He's not talking about some temporary housing or tent or some apartment complex where you might get the room next to the noisy ice machine. He has a permanent place for you to live, something solid in the midst of all the changes to the familiar.

Believe Jesus when he says, "I am going to prepare a place for you." (verse 2) I'm going ahead of you to get things ready for your permanent dwelling place. You don't have to scout it out. You don't have to get inspections or put in offers or do renovations. I'm going to prepare a perfect place for you.

Believe that "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am." (verse 3) I'm not abandoning you; I'm coming back for you. I'm doing this for you. You and me, we're going to be together forever – a familiar friend and familiar God that will never go away ever.

"You know where I am going, and you know the way." Believe that this is happening. Believe that this is your future – not some uncertain, murky idea of what's to come. No, you will clearly, certainly be with me always in this wonderful place that I have prepared specifically for you that we will never again have to go through the upheaval of constant change and the troubling loss of familiarity that we have all undergone over the last two months. Believe it, and it will calm your troubled heart with the certainty of what I am doing.

At this point, we can't help but let Thomas speak for us. "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (verse 5) My heart isn't at peace yet; it's still troubled. I like this idea of unchanging stability in my future, but how do we get there?

Jesus said to him and to us, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me." (verse 6) It's what Jesus has been saying all along. He is the Bread of life, the only one who leaves us satisfied through his life and his works for eternal life with God. He is the Light of the world, the light no darkness, no change, can overcome. He is the Gate, the only one through whom we enter into God's flock, his care. He is the Good Shepherd who is the only one who ever could lay down his life only to take it up again for us. He is the Resurrection and the Life who swallows death whole so that we have life eternal with him.

Jesus, the Great I AM, God from all eternity with no beginning and no end, is the Way to this permanent dwelling place with God. He is not merely some road sign pointing out the path, giving us an instruction manual to life, telling us what steps to follow, or just pointing north like a compass. No, he is the Way, that it is only through him that you get unchangeable stability forever after. It is only through Jesus' life, his merits, his perfect works, his bloody sacrifice on the cross that we get this permanent dwelling place with God. This is the Truth, because the Great I AM is nothing but truth. There is no falsehood in him, no lies, no deception. He is the full revelation of this truth that Peter would later testify, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) This is the life that the Great I AM is and that he gives to us.

Believe when Jesus says, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life," (verse 6) and have peace for your troubled heart because he is the Great I AM. Jesus said, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." (verse 11) Jesus is God. If you know Jesus, you know God. Only God knows the future. Only God is solid and unchangeable. Only God can offer you a future that is permanent. Only God knows that he is preparing a place for you and that he will come back and take you to be with him forever. Only God could ever be the Way, the Truth, and the Life for us.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe in Jesus. He has prepared a place for you. He will come back and take you to be with him. Your future with him is certain and unshakable because only Jesus is the Great I AM. With him, you will never lose the familiar because Jesus is and always will be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.