

Abandoned to Never Abandon You

John 14:1-11 (CSB)

¹ "Don't let your heart 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 am going to prepare a place for you? ³ If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. ⁴ You know the way to where I am going." ⁵ "Lord," Thomas said, "we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will 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's enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time and you 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 I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.

It's the night before Jesus goes to the cross. He's already washed his disciples' feet, setting them an example of how to love and serve how he has loved and served them. He has specifically called out Judas as the one who will betray him to his death. After Judas had left, Jesus told his disciples, "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'" (John 13:33) Peter insisted on following Jesus, even to the point of laying down his life for him. Jesus responded to Peter saying that he would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crowed the next day.

How upsetting and troubling these words were to hear! Jesus, their teacher, their protector, their God, their friend for the last three years is leaving them! They had given up their jobs to be with him, and now he is abandoning them!? Why!?

You know what it is to feel abandoned, don't you? You have people flashing through your mind right now, people you love, people you can't get enough of, people you always want to be around them, people you opened up to, trusted, and they left you. Maybe they moved away – had a job opportunity, or they just said that it was time for a change. Maybe they were not there when you called them looking for their help and support and they never called you back. Maybe they stormed out or quietly snuck out and never came back. Maybe they abandoned you by dying. You have felt abandoned, left alone to sort out the pieces of life.

Of course the disciples would be upset and troubled that the one relationship that should have been solid now seems to be ending. Jesus is going away, and we can't follow. I mean, at least he has the decency to tell us, but that doesn't fix my troubled heart. He was supposed to be different. He's supposed to always be there for me because he's God. So, why is he abandoning me? Can I ever have a relationship where I won't be abandoned?

Jesus knows that his disciples', his friends', hearts are troubled. He has an antidote for that. "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." (verse 1) You fear being abandoned, thinking that you will be left alone. Other people have done it to you; why not God? Here's what I want you to do with that fear, with that troubled heart: Trust in God. Why? Because God is with you right now, and he will always go with you. He never takes a break from being with you, never takes his eyes off of you for even a second. There is no where in this life that you can go that God is not there with you. This is what he does and has promised to do. Have you ever seen God break a promise? Nope. Take it to heart that he will never leave you nor forsake you. Believe in God.

And I also want you to believe in me. Yes, I am going away from you physically, going some place you cannot come. You can't come because where I'm going is to complete my mission for you. You can't do it for me or with me. You can't help me do it. This is something I have not to do – and it's not for me, but for you. I have lived a perfect life for you, kept all of God's commands without fail, and now it's time for me to lay down my life for you all. I am going to be betrayed and handed over to the religious leaders. I am going to be beaten and tortured and shamed. I am going to be nailed to a cross. I am going to be abandoned by God and die.

When was Jesus, who is also God, abandoned by God? On the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Why have you abandoned me? These words show us that the eternal and infinite God made flesh suffered the eternity of hell that our sins deserve. No person this side of heaven is ever abandoned by God. Just observe the rain. It falls on the righteous and unrighteous alike so that crops grow and we all can eat. But for what looks like a moment for us, for Jesus, being eternal and infinite, it was a whole eternity of hell for all of us. Our sin separates us from God. Jesus took our sin on himself. He suffered hell for us, was abandoned by God, so that we would never be abandoned by God!

What's the proof that God will never abandon you because of your sin? It came 3 days later with Jesus' resurrection. He was raised to prove that Jesus' payment for our sin, his abandonment for us in our place, means that God will never abandon you, never cast you aside. Instead, he is with you now and will be with you always.

That's why Jesus said, "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also." (verses 1-3) Yes, I'm going away from you physically so that I can be abandoned by God so that you never are. But more than that. Because I will rise in 3 days so that you know that God has accepted my abandonment in your place, I want you to know what else I am going to do for you. I am going to heaven to prepare a place for you, a forever place. I will come back to you and take you to be with me always in heaven.

How do you picture heaven? Do a Google image search, and the top results are all bright blue skies, white clouds, brilliant light, maybe pearly gates or a golden city. In these verses from John, you can get a picture of a giant, magnificent hotel but only a room for you. A hotel stay can be fun, especially if you are in a luxury one, but eventually you want to get back home. Just a room doesn't sound that great of a place. In the King James Bible translation, we get the picture of mansions, that we all get a mansion in heaven. That's nicer than a room, but still, that picture of the where we reside in heaven is lacking.

Jesus is holding up a picture of heaven to his disciples to comfort their troubled hearts. He doesn't focus on the room, but who they are with, who we will be with. Heaven is being with Jesus, never being abandoned by him.

We have some really great relationships here on earth, but the sad truth is that all of them will end with some kind of abandonment – whether it is by a malicious, sinful choice like desertion, a dictated choice like a forced move, a prioritized choice like being unavailable because they're with someone else doing something else, an opportunistic choice like a job change, or a decision not made by us such as when we die. It will hurt when these people are no longer there for us. The solution is not to cut ourselves off from any relationship because they will end in abandonment. Jesus' solution to our troubled hearts is by showing us that we have a relationship with him that will never end in abandonment.

Jesus offers to us a perfect relationship with him. He's already loved you at your worst and never turned his back on you. Instead, he went through abandonment so that you never would. He never has roaming or distracted eyes. His attention is on you 24/7, never once taking a break, never for a moment getting tired, never needing to do something more important, never unavailable. You are his priority all the time. And because he is God, he can and actually does do this for all of us all of the time! This is why we can believe that he will actually be with us always to the very end of the age.

This is not even just a future relationship; this is what we have right now with Jesus. Imagine that person that you can't get enough of, that you want to spend every waking moment with. This relationship we have with Jesus right now is even better than that. This is the only relationship with any person that does, in fact, last forever. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life so that you will never be abandoned by him.

Yes, we feel the pain of abandonment, and we know others who do as well. Some of them have sworn off relationships. Some of them sworn off God because they feel as if he has abandoned them. You have the antidote to their troubled heart that fears abandonment. You and I, we get to give people one person, one relationship, that will not fail them, someone who will not leave them. We get to give people the way, the truth, and the life, the Jesus who will never abandon them, but will always be with them and take them to be with him forever because he was abandoned for us.

Even though Jesus was physically leaving his disciples, God never abandoned them. Jesus, after being abandoned by God, was raised from the dead, making it known to us that God will never abandon us. Instead, Jesus is preparing a place for us. He will come back for us and take us to be with him, just as he has done for his trouble hearted disciples. Our God has given us a perfect relationship with him, a relationship that will never end. We will never be abandoned because he was abandoned for us. Amen.