

## Overcoming Trouble

John 14:1-14

Key Verse: 6

*“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Forest Gump famously said, “My momma always says, ‘Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re gonna get.’” And how true that is, we never know what tomorrow will bring. That was especially true for the people of Henryville, Indiana about 250 miles from us. On Friday afternoon a killer tornado ripped through their town leaving destruction in its wake. One man was watching on TV as the storm drew near. He said, “I saw it from the radar it was getting close, so I walked down the driveway and saw it coming through the woods.” Frightened, he got in his truck and drove south about a mile to let it blow through. However he returned to a grim reality. The tornado destroyed his house and the home of his aunt and uncle, who had their 4-year-old grandchild ripped from their arms as the tornado claimed 14 victims. Sadly, all three of their bodies were found in a nearby field. It’s true, in this world we will have trouble. Some big and some small but if you’re going to live life you’d better expect to have trouble. That may sound morbid, but the great thing is that through this passage Jesus shows us how to overcome our troubled hearts.

The disciples had followed Jesus with simple faith, leaving behind their families and careers. They persevered through hardship and training overcoming everything as long as Jesus was close by. Jesus was never discouraged. Jesus lived with hope and vision and he always knew just what to do. As long as they were with Jesus, they were sure that everything would turn out okay. But in the middle of their holiday dinner Jesus suddenly drops a bomb and tells them that one of their own is going to betray him and that Peter, the top disciple, is going to deny even knowing who he was. Not only that, Jesus is going to be with them only a little while longer because he’s going to leave them. After receiving this disturbing news, naturally they were stunned and their hearts were troubled. How did Jesus help his disciples? Take a look at verse 1. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” Fear is the root of being troubled. When we are troubled about something fear grabs a hold of our heart and paralyzes us making unable to react. Jesus says that the solution to a troubled heart is to trust in God and in himself. In our time everyone seems to be saying “trust me,” but seriously who can you trust? Politicians ask us to trust them while they are promising to change things for the better. But rarely do we see a change. What they fail to tell us is that they mean it’s going to get better for them. Who can we trust? Once I was involved in a car accident where my friend almost died. He got a lawyer to sue the driver who hit us. My friend’s lawyer said that I could trust him to help me too, however when the date of my traffic court came, he never showed up leaving me hanging. When I called him he acted like he knew nothing about it. He set me up to that he could have a stronger case for my friend. Who can you trust that is not out for themselves? Often famous people will appear in TV commercials selling things and people buy them because they have a false sense of trust in their favorite celebrity. Only to be disappointed that whatever they were selling is not as good as it is advertized. Who can we trust? Unlike celebrities who will say anything as long as they get paid, we can trust what God says because he is honest and keeps his promises. In fact the Bible is a record of God’s promises. The Old Testament records the promises that God made and kept. And the New Testament is about God’s promise that is yet to be fulfilled. And the question is, if God has kept all the promises of the past, why would he not keep the one that is yet to come? He’s proved himself faithful and we can trust him.

So what's the promise that is yet to be fulfilled? It can be found in verses 2-4. Let's read them. "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you."<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.<sup>4</sup> You know the way to the place where I am going." Jesus knows that his disciples were troubled by his leaving so he reveals his promise to come back and take them to be with him. Jesus is referring to his when he will come again in power and glory. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." It will be a wonderful time when Jesus returns for his people to take them to his Father's house. It will be a time of celebration unlike anything we have experienced before.

It is interesting that Jesus referred to heaven as "My Father's house." By calling it his father's house Jesus gives us a feeling of warmth and security, home. We love our home. At home you don't have to pretend to be someone else because you are always welcomed and loved. At home you can walk around in your p.j.'s with messed up hair and you don't care because you're at home. We love it when someone invites us over and says, "Come in and make yourself at home." Jesus gives a small glimpse of what heaven will be like. He describes it as house with many rooms. This gives the impression that we will be like one big family. We will live together, eat together, have fun together and yet we have our own personal place. Until about 5 years ago three of our kids had to share a room together. And Liz and Suzy had to share up till a year ago. How happy they were to finally get their own space. Our Father's house will be better than any mansion here on earth. Better than the White House, Buckingham Palace, The Taj Mahal and Palace of Versailles in France. Nothing on earth can compare to our Father's house. Revelation 21 gives us a beautiful picture of what heaven will be like. It will shine with the glory of God like a precious jewel clear as crystal and the streets will be made of gold as pure as transparent glass. The gates are made of pearl and the foundations are made of very precious gems. And there will be no more tears or death or mourning or crying or pain. Wouldn't it be great to go to a place like that, where all your troubles are gone? Jesus didn't talk about heaven as if it were a theological concept but rather in personal terms as a place of love, joy and peace. In doing so, Jesus expressed his own hope and longing to go to his Father's house and he wanted his disciples to have the same hope and faith. This is such a comfort for those who are facing hardships and having troubles. This world is not our destination; we are pilgrims passing through, on our way to our Father's house. While struggling with our troubles in this world, we can find real comfort when we remember that our heavenly Father has his house ready and waiting for our homecoming. Jesus wants us to believe his promise and fix our eyes towards heaven not staring at our troubles.

Thomas was the only one to have the guts to speak up and ask what everyone was thinking. He asked, "...Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" But his courage got him one of the most famous Bible verses ever recorded. Let's read verse 6. "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" Jesus says, "if you want to get to this place, this nice house where you live forever with God as your father, you as a family, here's how it happens; you come through me." Jesus makes a statement of exclusivity, that there is no way to forgiveness of sin, eternal life, salvation, the presence of God, the Kingdom of God, except by him.

Our world struggles a lot with Jesus' exclusivity. No one struggles with spirituality, prayer, miracles, or healing. People accept those things, what they struggle with is exclusivity. That one religion is right, and that one is wrong. That one sacred Scripture is right, and one is wrong. That one path to God is right, and the others are wrong. Everything has become relative where there are no absolutes. That's why the exclusivity of Jesus is what is in question today. The reason that Christians are sometimes considered narrow-minded and bigoted is because we are, because Jesus is. If I ask you, "are any of you bigots?" I bet you would say, "No way." Most people would because "bigot" has a negative connotation. But most people don't know the meaning of the word bigot. Bigot simply means is that you will not accept any other belief or opinion. So when it comes to the way to God, we have to be bigoted because Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. If you want the truth, you need Jesus. If you want to way to eternal life in God, you need Jesus. And if you want to have true life, you need Jesus. And since Jesus has taught us this, we hold on to it. That makes us counter-cultural, and at some points, it causes people to dislike us, but do you know what? That's okay. We don't have to get upset. We don't have to hate them because of it. We don't stop loving people because they don't agree with us. We should love them, but we love them in a way that is truthful, that tells them about Jesus. People will try to tell you that there are many ways to God. There are about 1.5 billion Muslims, 1 billion Hindus, 0.5billion Buddhists and another 1.5 billion people in other religions in the world, can they all be wrong? However Proverbs 14:12 says "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Just because some way may seem right to a man, doesn't mean that it is.

So why is Jesus the only way? How can we be so sure every other religion is wrong? There are at least three reasons why Jesus is the only way. First, if you want to go anywhere you have to know how to get there, you have to know the way. It's not a problem when you are familiar with where you want to go, because you know the way but when you don't know the way you need help. However not just any help, you need the right help. A while back I borrowed my dad's gps for a trip that we were taking. During the trip everything worked fine but when we were meeting him to return it, we decided to meet at a restaurant but the stupid gps took us to a golf course thus making us late. So getting the right directions is important. Jesus is the way to the Father's house because he is the only one who has come from God, so he knows the way. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:13, "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man." When Jesus speaks of the Father's house he is speaking of what he's seen and experienced. The reason Jesus knows the way is because he IS God. If you remember back in John 8, Jesus was having a discussion with the religious leaders and they said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!" At this the Jews picked up stones to kill him because they knew what he was claiming, he was saying that he is God. Buddha, Confucius or Muhammad never claimed to be God, only Jesus did. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus is the way because he is God and he has been to his Father's house. When Jesus came down from heaven he came to bridge the gap between God and man. No one could climb up to God by human effort. So Jesus came down from heaven to earth to open the way to God.

Secondly, Jesus is the way to the Father because he alone solved our sin problem. In the Old Testament system, God lived among his people in the Most Holy Place of the temple. There was a thick heavy curtain separating God's dwelling from the rest of the temple to protect the priests. Only the high priest could go in there once every year to offer an animal sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the people. This was a temporary system that did not really solve man's sin problem. However, when Jesus died on the cross, shedding his blood, he made an offering acceptable to God.

Hebrews 10:19-22a says, “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith....” Jesus is the way to God. People are overcome with guilt for their sins. Often they try to forget their sins but they can't. They try to escape from their sins by drinking, drugs or any number of ways but inevitably they must return and face their sins. Only when we bring our sins to Jesus can we find forgiveness because he is the only one that paid the price for our sin by shedding his blood.

Thirdly, Jesus is the way to the Father because he is the only one who has conquered death. At one point we lived in paradise, it was called the Garden of Eden. But we were kicked out because we sinned against God. Since then we live under curse with the fear of death. But then our heavenly Father sent his only Son Jesus to pay the price for our sins and open the way for us to come back home. Jesus said in John 11:25-26: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” Jesus is the only one to rise from the dead. Before Jesus' resurrection, men lived in the fear of death. But Jesus conquered death, and as proof he appeared to many witnesses. It's through Jesus that we can have this same victory over death. Only in Christ, death has no power over us. Jesus is the way to eternal life in God.

Next, Jesus says he is the truth. Many people think of truth as a set of principles or rules. Some think the truth is scientific fact. However the Bible says that truth is a person; Jesus is the truth. Why is Jesus the truth? Truth is described as being universal and unchanging. Jesus is universal. He is for every person, rich or poor, man or woman, old and young, every ethnic group of all nations. Jesus is also unchanging. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” But ultimately Jesus is the truth because he tells us where we came from and where we are going. Jesus taught us that we came from God, that our lives have absolute meaning in God, and that when we die we are going back to God.

Lastly Jesus says that he is the life. John 1:3-4 says, “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” Jesus is the key to our existence. Everything that we see, smell, touch has been created by God through Jesus. All life exists because of Jesus. In fact Jesus is the source of life and that includes both physical and spiritual.

Jesus said in verse 7, “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” In spite of his disciples' unspiritual minds, Jesus asserted that they were now those who knew God and had seen God in Jesus. Jesus' words of hope and faith were nothing but grace to his disciples. It was time for them to say, “Amen.” But Philip spoke up, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” It seems that Philip didn't hear what Jesus had just said. Worse still, it seems that Philip did not understand the main point of Jesus' teaching in the whole of John's gospel. It is that Jesus is God. Perhaps Philip wanted some kind of supernatural experience in order to believe.

How did Jesus answer? Look at verses 10b,11. “The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.” Essentially Jesus was telling Phillip, “Phillip, if you want to know who I am all you have to do is look at three things; look at my words, how I lived, and the miracles.” To know who Jesus is, we have to look at what he taught and make sure it is in line with Scripture. How he lived, what did he do, was he consistent and look at his miracles. The miracles are evidence that God was with Jesus. If

we look at those things we will come to an understanding that the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father. The Father and the Son are one. They are God.

Look at verse 12. “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” Jesus went to the Father through his death and resurrection and ascension. Jesus sits at the right hand of God and grants the Holy Spirit to his people. Through the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus changed his disciples and enabled them to do greater things than Jesus. Greater here refers to quantity not quality. Let’s be clear, no man will be greater than Jesus. However Jesus encouraged his disciples that they too would be able to do many great things. And in verses 13-14 he tells them how they would be able to do them, “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” They would be able to do great things if they prayed. Jesus urged them to pray. Because it’s through prayer that we have a relationship with Jesus and when we pray he moves our heart and can do great things through us.

So when we have troubles, what shall we do? Shall we drown our sorrow in a case of beer while singing country western songs? Shall we give in and give up because life is too hard? Shall we be full of anger shaking our fist at God? What shall we do? We should praise God who has had tremendous mercy on us and has invited us to come and stay with him in the most amazing place imaginable. And that he didn’t block our way from it like rich country clubs do. Instead he sent the one person to us who could show us how to get there. He came to lead us back home. When we realize the love of God and know that this world is not our destination, that heaven is our destination then we can overcome our troubles and hardships. Just look at Stephen who while being stoned to death looked up and saw heaven open and Jesus welcoming him in. And amazingly he could forgive those who were in the process of killing him. Look at Joni Eareckson Tada who was paralyzed from a skiing accident when she was 17. However she lives for the glory of God overcoming her situation. Or Fanny Crosby who was blinded but overcame her situation because she longed to see Jesus’ face. The list of those who have overcome their troubles is long, Job, Corrie Tenenbaum etc. What has been troubling you lately? What has your heart troubled? Maybe it’s a problem with your job, family, school or health. Whatever it is you’re not alone. We all have problems that trouble us but remember, this world is not the end, we have a glorious home in heaven waiting for us. All we have to do is follow Jesus as he leads us there. Jesus gives us peace in the midst of trouble. Jesus can help us carry our burden when we go to him. The secret to overcoming your trouble is to follow Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life.