

Title: The Blessedness of Trust

Sub-Title: Comfort for the Troubled Heart

Our Gospel today is part of what is commonly known as “The Farewell Discourse” of Jesus because it takes place within 24 hours of his death. Knowing that he is about to die, John describes Jesus as being *“troubled in spirit”*¹ as the horrors of the cross are in full view before him; yet despite this, he is more concerned about the troubles and trials his disciples were about to face.

He knew they were grieving when he spoke of leaving them and had said they could not come where he was going. Neither were the disciples shielded from life’s disappointments when they heard that one from their small group of twelve would betray Him. Then to make matters worse, he foretells that even Peter would deny him. These words were alarming and perplexing. But what troubled them the most was that they couldn’t imagine how God could allow his Son to be betrayed and killed by his enemies. But Jesus said, *“I am telling you this before it happens, so when it does happen, you will believe that I am who I am.”*²

Hidden within this verse is a cryptic phrase that identifies Jesus with the personal name of God given to Moses in the wilderness. When Moses encountered God in the burning bush, he asked God to reveal his name. Jehovah said, *“I AM who I AM.”*³ The significance of God’s self-given name encompasses all He is and how we are to relate to Him, especially in times of trouble and distress. Therefore our Gospel today begins with the words, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;**

¹ John 13:21

² John 13:19 The Greek words ‘ego eimi’ translated as YHWH in Exodus 3:14

³ Exodus 3:14

believe also in me.”⁴ These words were given to make faith accessible by placing God the Father and Jesus as close together as possible. If Jesus is the great “I AM,” then he is also all-sufficient for everything we need.

Jesus continues this teaching by reassuring his disciples that even though he is leaving them, they can be certain that he is ***“the way, the truth, and the life.”***⁵ In the original Greek, each of these descriptions is preceded by a definite article. Literally, this means that Jesus is the way for going and the truth for believing. He is the life which overflows into eternal life. Then he concludes with the promise, ***“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.”***⁶ Even amid the violence and hatred he was about to face, his disciples could still trust him. This kind of intimate trust is welcomed and assured but never forced. Therefore Jesus says, ***“But if you do not believe, then believe me because of the works themselves.”***⁷

For myself, I find that trust grows as I am mindful of the Lord’s faithfulness in times past. Anna Warner, the composer of the song “*Jesus Loves Me*,” tells the story of her Father losing everything they had in the stock market crash. But even though her family faced overwhelming debt, she learned to trust God for all of her needs. A friend once asked her how she kept going. She responded by holding up a delicate lace-like seashell and said, *“There was a time when I was very perplexed, bills were unpaid, and many desires were left unmet, but then someone sent me this exquisite thing. As I held it, I realized that if God could make this beautiful home for a little creature, He would take care of me.”*

⁴ John 14:1

⁵ John 14:6

⁶ John 14:10

⁷ John 14:11

In a similar manner, John tells us in our Gospel today that Jesus has gone “to prepare a place for you.”⁸ That place will be more beautiful than we could ever imagine. His love for us inspires faith, that will one day be rewarded. Therefore the solution that Jesus gives to his disciples in their time of trouble and perplexity is not just words but a relationship with him. If we rely on him, who is “*the way*,” we will discover that our footing is sure. The path is solid. If we rely on him, who is “*the truth*,” we will find that light he provides becomes unveiled before our eyes. If we trust in him who is “*the life*,” we will “*taste and see (for ourselves) that the Lord is good, and blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.*”⁹ The phrase *taste and see*, then, means to “try and experience.”¹⁰ Therefore the Christian life is not just a journey of learning more Bible facts about Christ. It is a journey of coming to know Christ intimately and personally.

Paul tells us in the book of Romans that “faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.”¹¹ The writer to the Hebrews tells us that “we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it,”¹² (or let them slip – as KJV renders it). God’s promises are like a football that has been thrown to a receiver who must grab it and hold on tightly to it as he runs to compete in the game.

In 2001, Garth Brooks wrote about his personal faith journey in the song “When You Come to Me Again.” The lyrics express the struggle we all experience as life’s storms toss us. But one of the verses at the end of the song caught my attention,

⁸ John 14:2

⁹ Psalm 34:8

¹⁰ Quote from “Got Questions” website

¹¹ Romans 10:17

¹² Hebrews 2:1

“On a prayer, in a song, I hear your voice, and it keeps me hanging on.”

Faith is something that keeps us hanging on. When Jesus said, **“Believe in God, believe also in me,”** he used a verb tense representing continuous effort and action. So, could it be that what we hang onto—what we all long for in the deepest places of our hearts, is to know Jesus Christ personally and experientially in a way that nurtures and feeds our faith? His promise remains: “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden,”¹³ and the rest that he promises is one that comes as we learn to trust in him. Amen.

¹³ Matthew 11:28