Troubled Hearts, Future Hope
John 14:1-14

We're looking at John's gospel, and in the first 12 chapters John covers a lot of ground - 2 to 3 years of ground to be precise. But from chapter 13 onwards, it's as if he slows the movie right down and takes us moment by moment through Jesus' last hours.

But it's not just the speed that's changed. Have you noticed the mood?

Go back to chapter 12 where Jesus says, "Now is my soul troubled" (12:27) - as he sees his death fast approaching. And here, sharing his last supper with his disciples, John tells us, 'Jesus was troubled in his spirit' (13:21). Troubled at the prospect of Judas betraying him.

And yet it's not just Jesus who is troubled, is it? As we're going to see, so are the disciples. And yet, the reasons they're troubled bear a striking similarity to why your own hearts can be in turmoil at times. And so as Jesus addresses them - he's addressing us.

So we're going to look at 4 things. Present trouble, future hope, the way up, and the way on.

Present Trouble
Look at v1, where Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled." Which means the disciples are troubled, doesn't it? And you don't need a degree in psychology to work out why.

Firstly, they're confused. Jesus has been talking about his departure and his death, but in the same breath about him being glorified; then he talks about being betrayed and denied - by them, his friends - and their heads are spinning. Verse 36 "Lord, where are you going?" Verse 37, "Lord, why can I not follow you now?" Verse 5, "Lord, we do *not* know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Secondly, they are beginning to understand that they are going to lose Jesus. Verse 36, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now." And later, in chapter 16, Jesus says "Because I have said these things to you, *sorrow* has filled your heart" (16:6).

But thirdly, doubt is stretching it's cold and icy fingers around their hearts. Jesus tells them he's going to be betrayed - by one of them - and John tells us, v22, 'The disciples *looked at one another*, *uncertain* of whom he spoke.' Uncertain of whom they could trust. And then, in v38, he says to Peter, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." And maybe some of them are sat there thinking, 'Peter? Brave, reckless, rash Peter? But if he falls what chance do I have to stand?' So they're not just uncertain about the others in that room. They're probably uncertain about themselves as well.

But think about that. Confusion, loss, and doubt - doubt about others and doubt about yourself. Aren't those some of the major reasons why our own hearts can be troubled?

Think of confusion. Maybe you go through something that leaves you questioning, 'why has life turned out this way?' Or if you're a Christian, 'God why have you let this happen?' And inner confusion can be very unsettling.

Or maybe you're experiencing loss. Maybe someone's trashed your reputation, or some relationship you care about has grown cold, or you really are grieving the loss of a loved one. And that loss, that feeling that you have been robbed, robs you of peace.

Or maybe it's doubt. Someone's let you down, or betrays your friendship, or stabs you in the back, and you struggle to know who to trust. Or maybe temptation is strong and you feel weak, or your faith feels flakey. And so whether it's your confidence in others, or your confidence in yourself - confidence is at rock bottom. And your heart's at sea.

Ok, but what do those feelings of confusion, loss, and doubt, say about the kind of world these men, and you and me, want? Because it's not a life of confusion, is it? They and you want life to make sense - and instead of feeling like you're groping for answers in the dark, the lights are on, and you know why God does what he does and allows what he allows, and there's no gulf between you and him. That's the kind of life we want - or else why are we troubled when it's not like that?

But we also want a world where there is no loss, don't we? When good things are not taken from us unjustly, where we don't have to say goodbye to those we love; a world where relationships don't turn sour and friendships never grow cold. A world where those things just keep getting better.

And don't you wish there was a world free of doubt? Free of suspicion and second guessing about motives and actions of others? A world where our seemingly endless ability to mess up is finally dealt with.

None of us want troubled hearts, or the things that make for troubled hearts. What we want is what the Bible calls *shalom*, peace, where everything works as it should, and the world is made right. We want Eden restored.

In Jesus' words, what you really want is the Father's house.

Future Hope

Look again at v1: "*Let not* your hearts be troubled." Which means, these guys and you and me can *do* something about the state of our hearts.

So what do you do? I mean, when your heart is troubled how do you treat it? When you're anxious or fearful, when you're confused or sad or full of doubts, how do you restore calm to your heart?

Do you try food? 'I'm stressed, give me chocolate'. Or wine? 'Just a glass.' Do you try and run it off? Or go on-line and watch something you shouldn't? Or does it just erupt and you take it out on those around you?

You see, what Jesus is saying is, it's not wrong to want a life free of confusion, loss, and doubt. But what might be wrong is the way we go about trying to get it.

Verse 1, "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." And so the treatment for trouble is trust. It's faith - and firstly, faith in a person, not an outcome.

You see, as these men face uncertainty about their future, and uncertainty about each other and themselves, Jesus is saying 'but there is one you *can* be certain of.' That in the hours to come, as they watch the suffering and death of Jesus, they can know that God knows what he's doing. They can find rest in his sovereignty. And so can we. That God never allows anything to happen to you without a loving fatherly purpose.

But of course, when you're confused, or facing loss, or full of doubts, a purely intellectual belief in a God who's in control may not cut it, might it? What you need is a God who's come close, a God who knows what it is to suffer, and be troubled. So trust also in me, Jesus says.

And that trust is also aimed at a future outcome. Verses 2-3: "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am you may be also."

Now, if you're generally an optimist, you might treat your trouble of heart by telling yourself things are going to work out ok. Because I still have my investments, or I still have my health, or my friends and my family. Or something will turn up.'

The problem is, those things are vulnerable to change, aren't they? Investments, health, friends, family, can all fail. And Jesus is saying, 'Trust me, and not that life will always go well, but that something far better is coming. That world you long for, that Eden restored, that home-coming of all home-comings is coming, because I'm going.'

You see, is the Father's house a heavenly apartment block with a concierge who tells you when you can and cannot use the washing machine?

No, it's the house of God. It's the temple. And theologians recognise how right at the beginning of the Bible, the Cosmos, with the Garden of Eden at the centre, was the original temple, where humanity could enjoy uninterrupted friendship with God. But how does the Bible end? With the New Jerusalem - the dwelling place of God, the Father's house, coming down from heaven, to once again join heaven and earth. And John says, 'I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' (Rev 21:22).

And Jesus is saying, 'You are troubled by confusion, loss, and doubt. But my going, my death and resurrection, is going to secure the place where every longing is fulfilled, where everything wrong is going to be put right… And there will be room enough.'

But maybe when your heart is troubled you look at yourself and think, 'yeh, but I'm not good enough. I don't pray enough or I don't resist temptation long enough.' And Jesus says, but there is room enough. Room enough for you. Because he doesn't say, 'trust in yourself'. He says. 'trust in me', and look up to that eternal future.

The question is, how can you do that? Which is what Thomas is asking.

The Way Up

Verse 4-5: "You know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" I mean, if you're going to a meeting somewhere, but you don't have the address, how do you know what route to take, or what bus stop to get off at?

So, 'sure you're going somewhere Jesus, but where's the *where*? Drop us a pin, show us a map, tell us the way.'

Verse 6, ‘Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”’

Now, back in the autumn, Su and I were out hiking, but somehow we’d managed to get off the path. And to start with it wasn’t a problem. But with time the ground got boggier and then the undergrowth got thicker and in the end we realised that we needed to be down there, while we were up here, and there’s this steep drop between here and there. And we ended up having to scramble and slide our way down while holding on to any passing root or branch that came to hand. And as we did, I was thinking, this was not a good idea.

And Proverbs says, ‘There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.’ (Prov 14:12). And you have these longings for the kind of life you want, but in trying to get there you can take a wrong path. I mean, if you’re not yet a Christian, maybe you’ve tried the path of spirituality - and mixed a bit of mindfulness with a bit of eastern mysticism. If you’re from a more conservative background maybe you deal with your troubles with a stiff upper lip, and the way to the world being made right is by being as morally-good-as-you-can-be. Or maybe some of you young guys see what’s wrong with the world and you take the path of the *manosphere* and its influencers, because *being a man* will secure the future you want. Or maybe for you it’s the progressive way of my way, my truth, my life.

And Jesus is saying, ‘No. I’m the path and you’ll only escape the maze of life, you’ll only find what your longings are pointing you to by coming to me. Because it’s only my going, it’s only the cross, that can make a road back to the Father’s house.’

And he’s the way because he’s the truth, and not just a speaker of truth. Which means you’ll never make sense of life, your confusion will never lift, without him. Without him, you’re like a blind man in a dark room, looking for a black cat, that’s not there. But with him, as the supreme revelation of God, as God telling us what he is like, life begins to come into focus.

Because he is the life. I mean, imagine a hospital ward of terminally ill patients, with their loved ones huddled around each bed. And everyone knows they only have a few days left to live. But there’s a new doctor at the hospital, with a new medicine. And as he goes from bed to bed giving each patient just a spoonful of that medicine, the results are incredible. Colour returns to their cheeks, eyes open, breathing settles, smiles form on their faces, and life is returning.

And that doctor would be a life *giver*. But Jesus is infinitely more. Because he doesn’t just give you life, he *is* life. And his words are spirit and life. And that proverb says that we try all these different ways to calm our hearts, and fulfil our longings, and find life, but ultimately they bring death. Because either they compound our problems, or they offer us something temporary when what we need is something eternal. And Jesus is saying, ‘Trust me, Thomas, and I will be that life for you.’

Which sounds great, but how can you trust any of it? I mean, if I were to say to you, ‘I, Martin, am the only way to God, I’m the embodiment of truth, and the source of life for every living thing’, you’d say ‘yes and you’re also nuts’. Because what sane man says these kinds of things?

But that’s the problem with Jesus, isn’t it? Read the gospels and you realise he’s the sanest man who ever lived. And Thomas and the others who saw him up close *do* entrust their lives to him.

And what he says next tells us why.

Philip says to him, v8, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." And Jesus replies, v9-10, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?"

You see, for Philip Jesus is not quite enough. He wants an encounter with God. He wants to see God in his glory. And maybe you know what that feels like. Sure there's Jesus, but I want, I need more. And Jesus replies, 'Philip, I am that glory, I am that more.' As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, 'He is the radiance of the glory of God, and the exact imprint of his nature' (Heb 1:3).

And within a few hours, Philip and the others will watch Jesus die the most shameful of deaths, a death designed to rob its victims of any pretension to glory. And yet, they'll conclude, he really was and is God incarnate. Why? Because a truck the size of the resurrection must have hit them, to persuade them.

Now, have you ever been to one of those *Rock n Roll* dancing displays, and the guy throws the girl over, and under, and you're wondering, 'how do they do that?' Well, look at what Jesus says: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (v10). And theologians talk of the *perichoresis,* the divine dance of the Trinity. Because Father, Son, and Spirit are surrounding and indwelling one another. And you watch those dancers and wonder, 'is that the guy or the girl who does that?' So with the godhead, one in essence, three distinct persons moving in perfect unity, you wonder, 'is that the Father or the Son?' As Jesus says, v10, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works."

Because to see Jesus is to see the Father.

And that's why you can trust him with your present *and* your future. Because it's not just his character, it's his words and his works, culminating in his resurrection, that tell you: he is not crazy.

Great, you might say, but is that all Christianity offers - mystical morphine to calm the soul? Or can it actually change your present? Well, what Jesus says is will change the what, the why, and the how of your life.

The Way On

Firstly, *the what* of life. Verse 12, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."

So faith is not just something you think, it's something you live. And Jesus isn't leaving these men to drift through life until they die or he returns. No, as the Father has worked through him, he will work through them. Just as he served them, they will serve others. Just as he preached good news and healed the sick, so will they. Because trusting Jesus isn't just the treatment for troubled hearts, it's a call to give your life for gospel spreading.

And yet… *greater* works? Greater as in *more spectacular*? That would be hard, wouldn't it? Greater as in *greater in number*? More than Jesus could do on his own? Maybe, but there's a perfectly good way of saying *more* instead of *greater,* and that's not what Jesus says.

So what is he saying? Well, look again at v12, “Because I am going to the Father.” And when he goes to the Father he sends the Spirit, and in the power of the Spirit these men will go out into the world. And Jesus’ ministry has been confined to this tiny geographic area. But when the Spirit comes, it is going to extend across the globe.

Which is where you come in. Because this is greater as in Gentiles as well as Jews. You as well as them. And if they aren’t left to live passive lives, neither are we. So believe in me, Jesus says, and I will do my work through you.

So it changes *the what* - the what you do with your life.

But it also changes *the why*. Verse 13, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son*.” You see, if you go through life thinking ‘my way, my truth, my life,’ you’ll also spend your life trying to win glory for yourself. But that’s never attractive, is it? So, if we’re not to become increasingly turned in on ourselves we need to be captivated by a vision higher than ourselves. So put your trust in me, Jesus says, turn your hope to my Father’s house, and it will free you to live a life that glorifies him, not you.

But thirdly, and finally, it changes *the how* of life. Verses 13-14: “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do… if you ask anything in my name, I will do it.” By which he doesn’t mean, ‘end all your prayers with ‘in the name of Jesus,’ and it will work like magic.’ It’s that think you have to make it through life on your own, you’ll either live in constant fear of failing, or become proud thinking you’re a self-made person.

But trust in Jesus, see how your longings point you home to the Father, see how his death and resurrection have made the way home, and prayer will move from being a duty to a delight and the fuel that empowers your day.