

John 14.1-11—Don't Give Up

I. Introduction

- a. Being in the military or, say, the Tennessee football coach often requires a temporary address, temporary friends, and temporary jobs. I suppose it's not as though that is the desired outcome but it comes with the territory. You must expect it. In some sense, they live a life more aware of just how transient life is. All of this is temporary.
- b. But permanence is the good life that most of us long for. Many of us are like the Hobbits where adventures are not appealing because they make you late for tea.
- c. Amid this fleeting life is the temptation to give up. We need to see that giving up is far worse than messing up. It's far worse than failing. It's far worse than not knowing everything exactly right. I could go on but messing up, failing, not having everything figured out is part of the journey.
- d. Repentance and forgiveness are sweet life-giving gifts but giving up leads to death. As a fellow forgiven sinner and parent and a pastor, I want you to hear that messing up isn't the end. Failing isn't the end. Not knowing everything isn't the end. Giving up sometimes feels like the best option but it's the last and final option.
- e. I'm thankful that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who comes after sheep who sometimes give up.

II. Main Point

- a. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." This is the only hope for troubled disciples. The Way that is always the same. The truth that never changes. And the life that never ends. One of the beauties of God's love is the fact that it is steadfast, immovable and everlasting.

III. Outline

- a. Troubled Disciples need only to trust the Lord
- b. Troubled Disciples want to know
- c. Troubled Disciples want to see

IV. Exposition

- a. We cannot lose sight of Peter's impending denial predicted by Jesus. Though I made the point last week that Peter's denial does not undo what Jesus had already said in that he would be with him later, it still remains to be seen. All of this is very unsettling for the disciples. And though we cannot see their hearts, Jesus knows they are troubled. They need only to believe but that's easier said than done.
 - i. Off the heels of Peter's impending denial, Jesus commands: Let not your heart be troubled.
 1. He's obviously telling them exactly what they need to hear. But even though this is a farewell, it is unlike any they have ever or will ever know. More about this later.
 2. Just imagine giving up everything to follow Jesus and now he's leaving. They left their jobs and their families. They gave up normal routines and a sense of belonging somewhere. Family gatherings. They left predictable income for uncertainty. They had given up family heritage...maybe family inheritance.
 - a. Where would they fit back in if this doesn't work out? Would their father let them start over in the fishing business? Can Matthew have his tax booth back? What will everyone think of them...you wasted 3 years of your life for what?
 - b. We are far weaker than we might want to admit or than we really know. We love security. We love knowing. We love belonging. We love seeing each other. All of that is beautiful and good. But all of it is temporary.
 - ii. The question now is, how? If you are one of these disciples, you would like to know how in the world can I keep my heart from being troubled about this?
 1. Jesus follows that first command with two more: Believe in God; believe also in me.
 - a. They would have certainly claimed to have trusted God. That would have been unthinkable. Yet, it is somewhat questionable. But Jesus adds that they must trust him too.

- i. Certainly, this could be the place to explain the distinct persons of the godhead but Jesus doesn't do that.
 - ii. As we will see, those questions do not come up. Yet, he is demanding that they trust God and himself. The overwhelming load of uncertainties must be met with trust in God and Jesus who keep their promises. They are troubled over what they don't know. And Jesus is troubled over what he does know.
 - 1. But that hour will change everything!
 - 2. Childlike faith isn't childish but rather it is unshakeable dependence. A child doesn't need to know everything to trust mom and dad. It's really quite amazing how little is actually needed to have dependent faith like that.
 - a. And look, I'm all about knowing the truth. I am not at all against that. However, someone's lack of theological knowledge doesn't undo the promises of God. For sure we should be maturing and helping others grow in the faith. But let's be patient.
- iii. Jesus answered the how question. Now he will answer the why question. Why should my heart not be troubled?
 - 1. He begins with, there in verse 2, a description of his Father's house. The translations vary here. Some say in his Father's house are many mansions or many rooms or many dwelling places.
 - a. Certainly, the fact that there are many is clear. It is also clear that they are already there.
 - b. But in light of these troubled hearts and uncertainty, the word for room or mansion literally means "make a staying."
 - i. The verb form of this word is used down in verse 10 which means remain.
 - c. So, the issue right now isn't on how elaborate the room is but rather its duration. The glory that Jesus describes here is focused on the permanence...that which lasts forever. That is why you should not be troubled in your hearts.
 - i. Look, golden streets are great but what encourages me to press on in this transient world is the promise of a permanent residence with the triune God! There's an end to all of this darkness and trouble.
 - ii. Troubled hearts need only to trust the Lord.
 - 2. Jesus then reminds them of his faithfulness to instruct them and keep his promises: (Jn. 14:2-3) If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ 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.
 - a. Jesus is the perfect teacher. He knows exactly what they need to hear, right now. And he knows they do not yet understand what he has told them. But they will, soon enough.
 - b. One thing he says here, "I go to prepare a place for you" is not very clear. I think that I have thought it sounded like Jesus would be starting a building project in heaven which didn't really make sense to me.
 - i. But I noticed that he said the permanent rooms were already in his Father's house.
 - ii. I dug into the word "prepare" and it can also mean appoint.

- iii. So here is my conclusion. I think Jesus means that he is going to the cross to pay for our way into his Father's house. Through Jesus' life, death and resurrection all who repent and believe in Christ have a permanent residence prepared and appointed for them.
 - c. There's something even greater than having a place that is permanent and a place where you belong. What is it? What's troubling the disciples? Is it not that Jesus is leaving?
 - i. I mentioned things that most people think about when things don't seem to be going their way. We immediately move to how am I going to fix this.
 - ii. I really think those things are on their minds but the real issue is Jesus. They are perfectly fine with what they have giving up if they have Jesus.
 - iii. Here is a probing question for us: "If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ was not there?" (God is the Gospel, 15)
 - iv. The great prize of heaven is not my own mansion or seeing my loved ones but rather being with Jesus—I want to behold the One who died in my stead.
 - v. For some of you, it is unthinkable that someone would long for the benefits of heaven more than Jesus. For others, that is their only longing.
 - vi. The gift is himself. (Jn. 14:3) I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.
- 3. The prize of heaven and the way to heaven are the same: Verse 4...And you know the way to where I am going. They don't want to be separated from Jesus but he is the way to be with him forever.
 - a. He emphasizes the way instead of the destination. He has already said that he is going back to the Father. He has said that he goes to prepare a place there for them in his Father's house and he will come again and he will take them to himself. Now, their most pressing need is that they know the way.
- b. Troubled disciples need to trust the Lord. But even with this explanation, the troubled heart finds it difficult to understand. And, I believe Jesus teaches in such a way that he exposes those weaknesses and misunderstandings that he might help them to know.
 - i. Thomas makes it clear that all of them do not understand. And yes, he speaks on behalf of the eleven. (Jn. 14:5) ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"
 - 1. He begins by saying that they do not know where he is going when Jesus stated it very clearly. Yet, this is part of the problem when the heart is disturbed, unsettled, and thrown into confusion.
 - 2. It's totally understandable that they want to know. Uncertainty is scary. But, that's why Jesus commanded that they trust him. He has given them no reason to doubt but they are. They have seen sign after sign. Nothing will change the fact that they want to know.
 - a. We have some glimpse of this as parents. Many times, our kids do not understand why we said no or maybe any number of things. But they must trust that we are doing what's best for them. They sometimes want to make their

- own decision and that day is coming for sure, but we must do what is right and good even when they do not understand.
- b. Every leader can never make everyone happy. I sure wish that were possible. Parenting was a unique challenge for me. To remain consistent in doing what is right is extremely difficult. I have grown so weary in addressing the same thing again and again. I wanted to give up. But for their good, I continued on the path we had charted and eventually it paid off.
- ii. Jesus could have given up on these disciples but he doesn't. When they still do not know the way, he remains with them and tells them the truth. (Jn. 14:6) ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
 1. First, Jesus answers the question of how can we know the way. What Jesus says is very clear. I am the way to where I am going.
 - a. Jesus makes the declaration again that he is I am—YHWH. Back in chapter one John said this: (Jn. 1:23) ²³ He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."
 - i. Who is the Lord? What did he come to do? (Jn. 1:29) ²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
 - ii. Jesus is YHWH and he came to take away the sin of the world. He came to prepare the way to be forgiven that we might have eternal life.
 - iii. And how will Jesus prepare the way in just a few hours? He will take the penalty for our sins on the cross. He will take the wrath of God and uphold the just payment for sin that God might have mercy on us.
 - iv. Why do we as Christian hold that Jesus is the only way to God? Is this claim narrow-minded? Is not God a God of love and let people choose their own path?
 1. First, we hold to this because Jesus said he was THE WAY. It's not something we made up.
 2. He made it clear with the rest of the verse: No one comes to the Father except through me.
 3. And finally, he is precisely the only way because he alone reconciled the sin problem. No payment; no way to the Father. No other religion has the way because they do not have the bloody cross and resurrection of God himself.
 4. God met his own demands for us and pays the penalty for not meeting his demands.
 2. Thomas a Kempis wrote: "Follow thou me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated."
 - c. Troubled disciples must trust Jesus. They want to know the way and that way is Jesus. Now, the troubled disciples think seeing the Father will remedy their troubles.
 - i. Jesus made the connection that if they had known him, they would have known the Father also. He goes on to say, "From now on you do know him and have seen him."
 - ii. Philip, is like, we haven't seen the Father. Show us the Father and that will be enough for us.
 1. Enough to no longer be troubled?
 2. Enough to clear up all of their misunderstanding?

3. How much do they need to see?
- iii. If, perhaps, there was a place where Jesus would lose his patience, this is the best opportunity. But he doesn't.
 1. Yet, he does question him. (Jn. 14:9) "Have I been with you so much time, and you still do not know me, Philip?
 2. He doesn't ask, "you still don't know the Father" but rather "you still do not know me."
 3. From the beginning of the Gospel according to John, Jesus, the Word, had come to reveal God to humanity by taking flesh. That's why Jesus' logic is: (Jn. 14:9) Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.
 4. To know Jesus is to know the Father. To see Jesus is to see the Father.
- iv. They have already seen the Father but they don't know it. They have walked with the Son for 3 years and have witnessed the perfect character of God clearly seen in Jesus. You would think if they knew the Father as they think they do, then they should have recognized him in Jesus.
 1. Jesus ends by asking them more questions that will later become very clear.
 2. He is working for their faith. He knows their hearts are troubled. He is the Good Shepherd. (Jn. 14:10) ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? 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.
 - a. If they know God's ways...God's character, why do they not notice them in Jesus?
 - b. All the works that were done by Jesus are the works of the Father.
 3. Jesus is very patient with his disciples. These last three years have not been wasted even though they are not getting it.
- v. He ends with this: (Jn. 14:11) ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.
 1. Do you recall John the Baptist sending his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the expected one or should they be looking for another?
 2. How did he answer that? (Lk. 7:20-23) ²⁰ And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" ²¹ In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²² And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

V. Response

- a. One response is this: (Isa. 26:3) ³ You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Though this is a farewell, Jesus remains with his disciples through the Holy Spirit which we will look at more next wee
- b. Another is this: (Heb. 13:12-15) ¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. ¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.
- c. Repent and believe. Come to Jesus. He is the only way to the Father.