

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

"I Am The Way"

John 14:1-3

Part One

How can believers be comforted when their earthly hopes are dashed? For instance, how can a single Christian be comforted when they realize that they might not ever be married? How can a Christian spouse be comforted when the marriage that they had poured so much of their lives into ends in divorce? How can a Christian parent be comforted when they lose a child in death or perhaps lose a child to the world? How can a Christian business owner be comforted when the business that he or she worked so hard to establish fails? How can a Christian widow or widower be comforted when their spouse of 50 years dies? How?

It is by reminding themselves that even though their earthly hope may have been crushed, their heavenly hope, which should be for them far more glorious and meaningful, is still very much alive and well. Can this really be a source of comfort for them? I don't know how you might answer that question, but I know how Christ would answer that question.

This leads us back to our study of the Gospel of John and Christ's farewell discourse, which begins in **John 13:31** and does not conclude until **John 17:26**.

This discourse began with an introduction in **John 13:31-36**. This introduction by Christ was designed to prepare His disciples for His death and His eventual separation from them, when He would, shortly after His resurrection, ascend back to His Father.

So, what did Jesus share with them in the introduction to this discourse? He shared with His disciples three fundamental factors that would be shortly shaping their immediate future. And what were those three factors? The three factors were a new glory, a new situation and a new commandment.

And how did the disciples respond to Christ and what He had to share with them? Or perhaps better said, how did Peter respond to Christ and what He had to share with them? Peter, thinking of himself more highly than he ought, actually chose to oppose Christ. In other words, rather than humbly accepting Christ's departure, he purposed to follow Him. This led him to display his pride in John 13:36, to flaunt his pride in John 13:37 and finally to have his pride challenged in John 13:38.

How was Peter's pride displayed? Peter's pride was displayed in **John 13:36** when he asked Jesus where He was going. This was not a question motivated by idle curiosity but rather by a purposed intent not to be left behind. And how was Peter's pride flaunted? His pride was flaunted in **John 13:37** when he, in opposing Christ's plan, in essence said, "You will not leave me unless it is over my dead body." This prideful outburst on the part of Peter did not go unchallenged.

Hopefully you remember how Jesus responded in **John 13:38**? **"Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times.'"**

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I believe that this statement combined with other earlier statements by Christ was devastating to the disciples. There was not a whole lot of joy in Mudville. Not only did it appear that Christ was not going to establish His kingdom, but even far worse in their minds was the very real possibility that Jesus, the one that they loved and whom they were willing to lay down their lives for, was purposing to separate Himself from them.

And this brings us to **John 14:1-6** as Jesus sought to comfort His disciples. And what did He want from His disciples as He sought to comfort them?

Jesus, in seeking to comfort His disciples, wanted them to believe three things (John 14:1-6). This weekend we will begin to consider those things. And hopefully as we begin to consider those things we will also come to know how we ourselves can be comforted when we find ourselves in similar situations and also how we can encourage others. So, what are those things that Christ wanted His disciples to believe?

First of all, Jesus wanted His disciples to believe that in spite of all the pain they were presently suffering, everything was under control and working according to His plan (John 14:1).

Jesus has just told His disciples that He was leaving them and that they would seek Him but they would not be able to find Him, nor would they be able to come to Him. But even though He had said these things, He did not want them to think, especially in the midst of their present disappointment, that things were out of control. In fact, everything from Christ's standpoint and His Father's standpoint was perfectly under control.

But even though this was the perspective of Christ, it certainly was not the perspective of His disciples. This is why Jesus in **John 14:1** began with these words, "**Let not your heart be troubled.**"

What a horrible time for Christ's disciples. Everything in their lives from their perspective was spinning out of control. All that they had hoped for and had valued seemed to be slipping through their fingers. But even though they might be going through a horrible time, what was the command of Christ to them? "**Let not your heart be troubled.**"

How could Christ, in that time of desperation, have commanded them not to have troubled hearts when everything that they hoped for and valued seemed to be slipping through their fingers? He could do this because of what He was about to share with them.

Let us continue to read the verse. "**Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.**"

What an amazing statement. Christ is in effect calling them to believe in Him even as they had believed in His Father. He is in effect saying to them, "You have believed that My Father has done pretty good by you, even though He is not physically present with you, then you need to believe that I will be able to do the same."

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In essence, Jesus, in this statement to His disciples, is making Himself equal with God. And if His disciples are able to see Him in this way then they should be able to view His impending departure in a totally different way than they have been doing.

When Jesus commanded His disciples to believe in God and to believe also in Himself, He was in essence commanding them to view His departure as a good thing (Romans 8:28). Why? Because He, like His Father, will be able from the glory of heaven to extend His care to them just as His Father is able to extend His care to them.

The same thing holds true for us today in terms of the ups and downs of our lives. We need to see Christ as being able to extend His care to us in the midst of whatever circumstances we may be in even though He may now at this point in time not be physically present with us.

The disciples clearly had been struggling with this concept and Jesus is telling them to stop it! They had a plan that they indeed thought better than the plan of Christ, which was for Him to remain with them and to establish His Messianic Kingdom. But this was not the Father's plan and this was not Christ's plan.

The Father's plan and Christ's plan was that after Christ offered up His body on the cross as the propitiation for our sins, He would then return back to His Father and take His rightful place at the right hand of the throne of God. And from that position He would begin to build His Church, and eventually in time present the church to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing according to **Ephesians 5:27**.

This was the plan that was now going to be initiated. Israel in effect and their nationalistic hopes of an earthly kingdom was now going to be put on hold while Christ, through the coming of the Spirit into this world, would shortly begin to build His church.

And who would be among the very first members of that church? These forlorn, desperate, discouraged disciples were going to be in fact the very first members of that church. And what is the hope of the church? Is it an earthly kingdom or a heavenly kingdom? It is a heavenly kingdom.

Hopefully we have come to understand this. Hopefully we have come to understand that we as members of Christ's church are not, like the nation of Israel, vested in this world. We are simply as the disciples of Christ passing through this world to a better place. And this is what Jesus now try and help His disciples to see.

So, let us continue to read but this time we will read **John 14:2-3. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."**

Do you see any mention of an earthly kingdom by Christ? No! He is not speaking to them of an earthly kingdom.

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He is not speaking to them of an earthy kingdom because after He establishes His church and they become the first members of that church their primary hope will no longer be earthly but heavenly.

So, Jesus in John 14:2-3 begins to talk to them about this heavenly hope. And what did Jesus want His disciples to know about this heavenly hope?

Jesus wanted His disciples to know that one day He was going to return in order to take them back with Him to His Father's house (John 14:2-3). Would these words of Christ in time prove comforting to His disciples? Absolutely!

All that they wanted was to be with Christ. Why else would they have left their houses, their families and their possession in order to be with Him? They truly believed in Him and wanted to be close to Him and this had not changed even after He had spoken to them of His betrayal by Judas, the denials by Peter, or His stated purposed in needing to leave them. They still wanted to be close to Him. And Jesus was now making sure that His disciples understand that even though the plan that they would have preferred, which was for Him to stay with them and to establish His kingdom, is not going to take place, the plan that He is going to work out for them after He leaves them will be far better. And that plan is that He will return and take them back to His Father's house.

So, how many dwelling places did Christ tell His disciples were in His Father house? He told them that there would be many dwelling places. Isn't this exactly what Jesus said, **"In my Father's house [in the house that I will dwell] are many dwelling places"?**

In some translations they use the phrase "many mansions." However, that gives an incorrect idea. We tend to visualize a new real estate development with an agent who shows us a map and says, "Your mansion is two blocks down and four blocks to the left." But heaven will not be like that.

The phrase "dwelling places" refers to how the Israelites lived when a son became married. The father would add a wing to his house. When another son married, another wing was added onto the house. Eventually the original dwelling would become a set of dwellings that enclosed a patio in the middle. All the relatives would live around the patio. So, when Jesus was talking about His Father's house having many dwelling places, we should think of it a single house with many dwellings surrounding a central patio.

Will there be enough room for those who are going to heaven? Jesus said that in His Father's house are many dwelling places! Praise God! There will be no overcrowding in heaven; no weary traveler will be turned away. There won't be any "no vacancy" signs. God's house is as wide as His love; there will be plenty of room.

In fact, Revelation 21:16 gives us the dimensions of our Fathers' house. Let me read this for you. **"And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal."** So, what does this mean practically in terms of how many people could live comfortably in this city. Based on the calculation of an Australian engineer, this would mean that heaven, or in other words our father's house, could comfortably house 100 billion people. Now that is a lot of dwelling places.

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And what will be the experience of those who eventually find themselves there? Revelation 21:1-4 describes for us what those, who eventually find themselves in our Father's house, will experience. Let me read these verses for you. **"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. (2) And I saw the holly city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, (4) and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.'"**

And what will those who eventually get to heaven see? Revelation 21:18-23 tells us what those who eventually find themselves in our Father's house will see. Let me read these verses for you. **"And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. (19) The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; (20) the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. (21) And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass."**

These are pretty impressive sights, I am sure, but this is not what we as the disciples of Christ would be most interested in seeing. What the disciples of Christ would be most interested in seeing, of course, will be Christ. And for every true disciple of Christ, they certainly will not be disappointed. Let me continue to read, but this time I will read **Revelation 21:22-23**. **"And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. (23) And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb."**

How magnificent the heavenly city, with its transparent gold walls, jewels that sparkle from the lamb's glory.

Can we trust Christ when it comes to what He tells us about His Father's house? Of course we can. Let us once again go back to **John 14** and read. **"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. (2) In my Father's house are many dwelling places** [filled with wonderful experiences and wonderful sights]; **if it were not so, I would have told you."** He was saying, "Trust me!" Jesus always had told them the truth. He was not saying what He was saying simply to make them feel good. He said what He said about His Father's house because it was true.

And now we come to another wonderful statement of Christ in **John 14:3**. **"And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."** Not only is Jesus preparing a place for us in heaven, but He is also coming back to take us there (John 14:3). Praise God!

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I read about a father who dropped off his little boy at a street corner and told him he would be back in twenty minutes after taking care of some business. The father's car broke down and he wasn't able to get back to his son for four or five hours. The son waited on the corner by a store that whole time, and the panicky father had no way of phoning him. He didn't get back until eleven o'clock at night and the boy was rocking back and forth on the sidewalk whistling a tune. The father pulled up to the curb, hugged his son, and said he was very sorry. The boy replied, "What are you sorry about? You said you were coming."

This is the kind of trust we need to put in the Lord. He has told us that He will be coming back for us and this is all that should matter to us.

So, how can a single adult disciple of Christ be comforted when they realize that they might not ever be married? How can a disciple of Christ who is married be comforted when the marriage that they had poured so much of their lives into ends in divorce? How can a disciple of Christ who happens to be parent be comforted when they lose a child in death or perhaps lose a child to the world? How can a disciple of Christ who happens to be a business owner be comforted when the business that he or she worked so hard to establish fails? How can a widow or widower be comforted when their spouse of 50 years dies?

They all need to do the same thing. They need to remind themselves that Christ is working out His plan, and that when His plan is fully worked out, they realize their most valued thing is that they will ultimately be enjoying fellowship with Christ in that dwelling place He has prepared for them in glory.

May God give us the grace to trust His plan and know that He will ultimately bring us with Him to the dwelling place that He is preparing for us in His Father's house.