

Hanging Out With Jesus: Words Of Comfort For Troubled Hearts

Unedited Transcript

John 14:1-7

Good morning, men! We're going to start with a shout out this morning. This is going to be a fun one for me personally, because an Area Director is involved in this shout out. So we have a group called Wings and the Word. They're part of the First Heavy Metal Church in Christ of Greenville, OH. Mark Burd is their leader. Twelve guys, they're meeting Wednesdays at 8pm for over a year, and they're using the Video Bible Study. This is a church plant out of Dayton, OH and Clark Miller (who I will also give a shout out to), the Area Director there is meeting with Mark next week to talk about how they can expand their ministry. David Delk, our President, did a *Success that Matters* seminar there. Six men from the Dayton church attended the seminar and then they did the follow up plan and grew to thirty, and now we have this happening down there. So not only a shout out from us but also from your Area Director, Clark Miller, this morning. Would you join me in giving these guys a warm welcome? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us!

We're in this series called Hanging Out With Jesus, and this morning we're going to look at some words of comfort for troubled hearts. You may have heard this story; there was this guy and he was having some troubles and he was looking for some comfort, he was looking for a little direction, a little advice from God. So he decided that what he would do is he would take his Bible and he would cover his eyes and he would open the Bible and point to a verse. Whatever the verse said, he would do it. So he flipped open the Bible, covered his eyes and put his finger on a verse and the verse was "... and Judas went out and he hanged himself." So he decided to try it again. He covered his eyes and put his finger on a verse and he looked at it and it said "go thou and do likewise." So he tried one more time, put his hand over his eyes, his finger on a verse and the verse said "what thou wouldst do, go and do quickly."

What I want us to do this morning is to look at this text that follows the story of Judas and the story of Peter's predicted denial. We're still in the upper room, it's still Thursday night and what we're going to do is we're going to see how Jesus decides to comfort the disciples.

What Situation Called This Text Into Existence?

First, what is the situation that called this text into existence? The text we're looking at today is John 14. I had been waiting actually, in all the years I've been teaching this Bible Study, I have been waiting to do John 14, 15, 16, and 17 together. These beautiful, majestic, elegant words that Jesus spoke in the upper room. This morning we're going to be jumping right into that with verse 1. Here's what verse 1 says:

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Why are their hearts troubled? What is it that called this text into existence? The answer to that would be why their hearts are troubled. We know that in this upper room, they have already seen Jesus announce Judas' betrayal, and he's disappeared off into the night. Jesus has told them that I am leaving you, and where I am going you cannot come. They've had this messianic hope that Jesus was going to liberate the people from the oppressive government, but he says no I'm going to leave you and where I'm going you can't come with me. Then he turns around when Peter says something to him, and says look, you're going to deny that you even know me three times! So Jesus has thrown their world into chaos, that's why their hearts are troubled.

So what is the situation that you bring to this text yourselves? Where is your faith being tested to the breaking point? Where is your heart troubled? Where have you been knocked off balance? Where is your faith under attack? It might be because of poor judgment. It might be because you have sinned, or it might be because somebody has sinned against you, and what do you need? What do you need in this situation? Do you need advice, practical advice? Would you like me to tell you what you need to do to fix it? Would you like to have me explain why you made this mistake, what you've done wrong? Do you need a sermon? Do you need somebody to get angry with you and shake you up? Probably not. Just to carry this one step further, if you have a wife or a girlfriend and their hearts are troubled, what do you think they might need? Do you think that they might need to have you tell them what to do to make things better?

I was in Deland last weekend, speaking at a men's event. I met a man and his pastor both. The pastor told me some things about the man. He was in the first battle of Fallujah. He was an officer, and he had men dying on his left and dying on his right, and he was the one having to make the decisions about who would live and who would die. He brought a lot of things back home with him, had a lot of counseling, had a lot of advice, and had a lot of practical tips on how to make things better. And he's sort of one of those guys with a strong inner self, so he manned up and soldiered on with his life, having never really fully dealt with those things. But then he decided that his wife and children really needed some religious and moral instruction. So for the sake of his wife and the sake of his children, he decided to take them to church. On the first morning when he walked into this pastor's church, in the words of the man, the pastor ran up to me with a big smile on his face and he threw his arms around me and he hugged me and he told me how glad he was to see me! Then he told me oh I'm sorry, I thought you were somebody else! True story. But isn't that just like the Holy Spirit? Because what happened was that overwhelmed this man, and it began a process that made him think maybe he needed what this church had to offer him. So now, a few years later, his testimony is that it wasn't just for my wife, it wasn't just for my children, it was for me, too. I needed this! I needed what this Gospel had to offer me.

Jesus has said do not let your hearts be troubled, and then what did he say? Don't let your hearts be troubled! Suck it up man! Suck it up! Get a grip! You're making way too much of this situation! You're overblowing everything! Get a grip! Well, not exactly. Jesus doesn't make an appeal to human strength, human effort, human will or human self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Instead, he begins to talk about his Gospel. The Big Idea today is this: **Telling a person about Jesus will help them a lot more than telling them how to fix themselves.** Besides, you've tried that before, right? Didn't work, right? Yeah.

That doesn't mean there's not a place for practical advice, but that's secondary. Here's the problem, if you start by giving someone practical advice: here's what you need to do to fix your marriage, here's what you need to do to fix your kids, here's what you need to do to fix your addiction problem. What you're doing is you're inciting that man to use his own best thinking and his own inner strength to solve a problem that grace wants to solve, you see? So we bring people to Jesus, help people understand the

Gospel, the story of Jesus, and when Jesus says don't let your hearts be troubled, he's going to show us how it's his story that does that.

What Jesus Wants We Who Are His Disciples To Know While He Is Away

So let's take a look. John 14:1, second half says:

You believe in God; believe also in me.

Have faith. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Have faith. Believe. Reading on, verse 2:

² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

So Jesus has told them I am going to a place where they can't come, but he's also telling them he's going ahead of them to prepare a place for you. This is really beginning to give some substance, some concrete pictures of what heaven might be like. Verse 3:

³ 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.

Yeah, I'm going away but I'm going away to prepare a place for you. I'm coming back, and I'm going to take you to be with me where I am. When does that take place? It takes place at your death. Then he says:

⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going."

You know the way to the place where I am going. I rewrote this talk a couple times. I'm having to look at my notes, and I wrote down a couple verses. In him was life, he was the light of men. He said I am the resurrection and the life. The one who feeds on me will live because of me. He said because I live you also will live. So he has shown the disciples the way.

But then Thomas in verse 5 says to him:

Jesus the Way to the Father

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

And Jesus answered in one of the most famous texts in all of the Bible. He said I know the way. I know the truth. I have the life. He didn't say that, did he? That's what I would say! Hopefully, that's what you would say, is I know the way! Hopefully you would say I know the truth. Hopefully, you would be able to say I have the life, but Jesus didn't say that. Jesus says I am the way! I am the truth! I am the life! Can you imagine if I stood before you as your Bible teacher and said to you follow me, I am the way? Ten guys just walked, you couldn't see them in back there. I am the truth, I am the life. Because it is so familiar, sometimes we forget about it, but do you see just how unbelievably impactful these words were to these disciples? How amazing they are to us? How utterly preposterous this claim would be? Jesus, a great leader, or an absolute nut? Take your pick. He is the Messiah, or he is a looney tooney nutty buddy. Because Jesus said, looking right into your eyes right now, I am the way. I am the truth. I

am the life. Follow me. Put your trust in me. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Believe in me. Believe in the father, but also trust in me. Wow! Amazing! No one comes to the father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my father as well. From now on you do know him and you have seen him. We'll go more into that because Philip asks a follow up question. What are you talking about? We'll talk more about the father and Jesus being one. But this huge point today here is that if you need comfort or you know someone who does, this is it!

If you're an addict, do you think it would be helpful to know the twelve steps? Yeah! But is the twelve steps really going to conquer your addiction? Is it really going to change your life? Is it really going to transform you into the disciple that you want to be? That God wants you to be? The issue in this text is that Jesus is very concerned about how you, his disciples, are going to get along while he is absent. What Jesus wants we who are his disciples to know while he is away, and what's obvious here, is that what will comfort us is not an appeal to our human effort or our will to fix things and make them right. It's going to be an appeal to his Gospel. His Gospel is our comfort! It's not our own ability, it's not our strength to overcome, it's not our ability to endure and endure until he gets back! Oh, I'm a Christian! I'm just waiting for the Lord's return! He gave us the Holy Spirit!

Again this doesn't mean practical advice is not important, but practical advice is secondary. It's secondary to making sure that we and the people that we want to talk to about Jesus have an eternal perspective. It's important to bring an eternal perspective to our problems, that's what Jesus is trying to do. He's trying to give the disciples eternal perspective. That doesn't mean that he's not going to give nor hasn't already given lots of practical advice on how to resolve issues, but watch this; here's what advice does, it shows you how to use human effort and will to do what grace wants to do. When you give somebody advice on how to fix themselves, what you're doing is you're showing them how to use human effort and will to do what grace wants to do, and that's not the Gospel. So that's it! The Big Idea here: **Telling a person about Jesus will help them a lot more than telling them how to fix themselves.**

How Should A Disciple And Disciple-maker Respond?

So how should a disciple and a disciple-maker respond? Lead with Jesus. Always lead with Jesus. Always lead with his Gospel, and for yourself, don't run to your manual. Don't run to your book, the alcoholic's book, the Big Book for example, don't run to that. I'm not saying don't go to that later, but the first step is to run to Jesus! Run to Jesus Christ because he is the way, he is the truth, he is the life! He is the Gospel.

I was at the movies with Jim Seibert. We're standing in line, and in front of us was a man and his pastor who were also going to some movie. They were debating back and forth on what is the foundation of Christian manhood? They were going back and forth for a few minutes, and we were sort of overhearing but not really because we were talking, too. Finally, the layman turned to me. I was coincidentally standing in line behind him, but he turned to me and said sir what do you think is the foundation of Christian manhood? I said Jesus. His pastor slapped him upside the head because he recognized me and said you dummy! The foundation of everything is Jesus, because he is the way, he is the truth, and he is the life. So Jesus, when allowed to speak for himself, John 12:13, when I am lifted up (meaning when he was crucified, lifted up from the earth), I will draw all men to myself. So Jesus when he is allowed to speak for himself is going to do a better job of helping the person you want to help than ten thousand of your best explanations.

Jesus wanted to give these disciples words of comfort, because he knew that he was going away and he'd be gone for a long while. He's giving us the same words of comfort beginning in John 14 and of course all of his words. But especially these words in John 14, 15, 16, and 17 that we will be looking at in the days ahead.

I got jazzed up about this this morning, and I've started up a blog about a month ago. I wrote this this morning. The title is Stop Trying to Help People Help Themselves. The tone is not quite like I would use here. The wiser we are, the better we do, granted. But when we are wiser we are also more tempted to solve problems in our own strength. And not only our problems, but we are tempted to advise others to do likewise. Don't you know that's true? When you're a smart person and you know what needs to be done, it's easy to say things like you want to be a better husband? Here are three things that you can do to be a better husband, and none of them have anything to do with Jesus. You know what I'm saying? You're having a problem with your child? Let me tell you how to fix that child and here are two things you can do that are guaranteed to give you success and have nothing to do with Jesus. You know what I'm saying? Stop trying to help people help themselves. Here's the problem: that kind of advice tempts the would-be disciple to use human effort and will to do what grace wants to do. The only solution is to stop trying to fix people. Stop trying to help people help themselves. **When someone has troubles**, and this is the Big Idea today, **telling them about Jesus will help them a lot more than telling them how they can fix themselves**. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, I don't know what situation any of these men, maybe a couple, bring into this place today, but you know. And Lord, you know what will fix their situation and you know what advice will work, but you also know that without an eternal perspective, they will be doing those things in their own flesh, in their own strength, in their own will, and that's not the Gospel. The Gospel is looking to you, putting our faith in you, and believing and trusting that you will provide everything that we need to be the men you are calling us to be, including the advice that we need. Father, the prayer today is that we would be men who put our trust and our faith in you, just as this text says. To trust in God and trust also in me, that we would put our trust in you and not in our own strength and certainly that we would not encourage other people to fix themselves out of their own strength and ingenuity. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen!