

## John 14 – David Carpenter – “Disciples Trust Jesus”

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When someone says – trust me, I think one of our first thoughts is “What for?” we may trust them implicitly, they might be a close friend or family, yet, we want to know why they said that. In John 14:1 Jesus says “Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me.” Why? This is one of those verses that a lot of us have heard over and over again. That can make it easy to gloss over it, but I want us to explore that question of why Jesus said this to his disciples, and how it should impact us.

As with most passages in the bible, it’s really important to set the context of what we are looking at. Particularly with this beginning, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” we need to know what the disciples might have been worried about. Like someone saying trust me, if a person came up to you and said, “Don’t worry” you’d think “what am I not worrying about?”

These verses in John chapter 14 are set in the week leading up to Jesus crucifixion. A few days ago Jesus had come into Jerusalem with a bang. Not on a big white horse, but on a donkey with the crowds singing his praises shouting Hosanna! No problems there. However if you look a little further back in Chapter 11 when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, when Jesus tells the disciples that they should go back to Judea, it causes some objections. The disciples say “But Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” When Jesus gets them to go, Thomas in a rather fatalistic manner says – “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” the disciples knew that Jesus had enemies around who wanted him dead.

So now they are in Jerusalem, amongst the worship at the Passover Feast and Jesus speaks cryptically about him leaving, how they will only have the light a little while longer and the darkness will overcome them. They should put their trust in the light while they have it, so they may become sons of light (Jn 12:36)

Then in Chapter 13 he hits them with a big one. He tells them all that one of them will betray him! It’s an indicator perhaps of how troubled and confused the disciples were that they don’t even realise it is Judas when Jesus says it’s the one I give this bread to and then hands Judas the bread. To top it off, again he says that he will only be with them a little while longer and that where he is going, they can’t follow.

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I think it’s safe to assume that all the disciples were a little vexed. Throw in the fact that they were aware of the Pharisees looking for Jesus, probably to kill him; I think it’s safe to assume that they were indeed troubled. Now, Jesus says “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”

Why does Jesus say this? It was interesting to note that this is when Jesus himself was “troubled in spirit” from John 13. Jesus knows that soon he will be taken away, trialled and crucified. He will experience the weight of the sin of the world separating him from God the father, yet his concern is for his disciples. He could see their anxiety, and even though he is going to be betrayed, he acts to comfort them. Jesus says I’m going to go away, but there is a reason - trust me.

Who do we trust? That clip at the beginning of the sermon was there to get you to think about trust, about how we react to people saying something like “trust me” When we are troubled, what’s the best

thing that can help? Or perhaps, who is the best person to calm us down? Having some random stranger come up to us and saying don't be troubled, doesn't really do anything for us. You look for advice from friends, people you know and love. It's easier to listen to them and gain comfort from their words, especially if it's someone who knows your situation and can help out in some way. I'll often get stressed writing sermons. But I have a good friend who'll help me out and let me know what's good and what's not in the sermon. I trust him because I've known him for a while, heard him speak and he's shown that he can help me out in the past.

Jesus is like that for the disciples, yet in a far greater capacity than any human friend can be on earth. This is the Son of God saying to the disciples, "Trust Me". Looking at some alternate translations it could be read as "In the same way you trust in God, trust in me" This isn't just like trusting that a chair might hold you, or the person behind you will catch you in those team building games that we tend to play on camps. This is a trust in the creator of the universe. In some regards, if you don't have this trust – well, then everything kind of falls apart. It's the foundation of our faith – a trust in God and what he promises.

So what is the disciple's reaction to this statement from Jesus? They know he is going away, he's said that in different ways leading up to his crucifixion, but they also hear that it is for a greater purpose. This isn't some random jaunt to get away, and he's not abandoning them. He's going back to the Father to prepare a place for them, and what's more, they know the way to the place where he is going. It's all obvious, so they shouldn't be troubled, right?

As John has a habit of doing, he uses the disciples' confusion to move things along. Thomas pipes up with a question, "But we don't know where you are going, how can we know the way?" They still don't get it. They have been with Jesus for three and a half years and they still haven't grasped who it is they are walking with.

Jesus responds with another one of those verses that we hear a lot – "I am the way, the truth and the life, 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 have seen him."

Jesus is not merely some pointer along the way to get to know God. He is THE way, THE truth, THE life. If you need a reason to trust him, this is a big one. In terms of someone who can help us, someone who can restore our broken relationship with God the father, Jesus is it. If we accept that this broken relationship, sin, is the cause of all the pain and suffering in the world, and we want to receive this comfort that Jesus offers his disciples, Jesus is it. You could say without him there is NO way, NO truth, NO life.

In today's society, that's hard to hear that I think. The idea of any one person having THE truth is hated. The media often portrays Christians as narrow minded and rigid in their thinking since they won't accept any other truth as a valid alternative. Why can't we just accept that there might be alternate pathways to this god we talk about. However Jesus himself says that this is a point that we can't shift on. There is one God, Jesus is the way. Knowing Jesus is knowing our Father God.

The disciples aren't quite there yet. Phillip really shows this when he asks for just that one more thing – "Show us the father and that will be enough for us" What is it exactly that Phillip is saying? Jesus response is pretty strong, so what is it that evokes such a reaction?

Phillip is asking for just one more bit of evidence – in some regards the same sort of question as those who asked Jesus to perform one more miracle and then they will believe him. Jesus has just said to

them that if they know him, they know God, so by Phillip asking to see God he shows he doesn't really get who Jesus is.

Throughout his ministry Jesus has been showing the disciples who he is by what he has done and said. He reminds Phillip, "Listen to what I have been saying, haven't I shown you that what I say is from God? Or if you have trouble with that, believe I am who I say I am based on the evidence of the miracles that I have been performing." He is in the Father, and the Father is in him.

It's so essential for Jesus to get this across to the disciples, because he is going to be leaving them soon to return to the father. He is preparing his disciples for the hard road that is ahead. If we use the signpost idea again, he's holding up a slippery when wet sign. He knows that in the coming years and months, even in the next few days they are going to be persecuted, and face trials of all kinds.

If they get this, if they understand who Jesus is, then they *will* know where he is going and their hearts won't be troubled because they will realise the promise that he is giving. V12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father."

Trust in Jesus is only the beginning. From that basis of trusting Jesus and having faith in him, the disciples will go on to continue the work of Jesus. They will spread the news of salvation, they will continue in his deeds of service and love, we read about them later on in Acts.

For most of us perhaps, it's kind of obvious that we need to have trust in Jesus. You wouldn't follow someone you didn't trust. It isn't new ground for us, and you may be wondering what comes next. What are the implications of having this trust in Jesus? It starts with trust, without that, it all kind of falls apart. Trust in Jesus is a firm foundation for discipleship and life.

The disciples' trust in Jesus has grown into love – they have been following Him around for a number of years and they see what Jesus is doing. They see his compassion, they see his miracles and they trust what he says, even if they don't always get it. This love for Jesus continues in wanting to do what he teaches. At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus starts with trust in me. Now he continues with "If you love me, you will obey what I command." So trust leads to love which leads to obedience. Just before in Jn 13:34 Jesus has given them a "new commandment" to "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

So it should be for us. Do you trust Jesus? Good! Do you love him? Good! Then obey him! We need to be challenging each other to get out there and do what Jesus did. We need to be active in sharing the gospel, by speaking the words of the Father like Jesus did, by loving one another in such a way that all men know we are his disciples.

It's not easy, and I don't pretend that it is. While I don't think we get the same sort of persecution as the disciples, we do have our own troubles. I think in our western world because a lot of us are so self-sufficient, we can lose the urgency of the gospel message. We get caught up in this idea of tolerance in the world and become somewhat apathetic. We avoid sharing the gospel because it's not our thing – leave it to those evangelistically inclined. But that's not what Jesus said. He said – if you love me, obey my commandments. Love in such a way that the world knows about him.

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It's a bit of a scary thought, that we are told to obey and get involved in the work that Jesus did. But the same promise that he gave the disciples also applies to us. Jesus says that for those who have faith in him, will do what he has been doing. And more than that, he will do even greater things than these *because* he is going to the father. What exactly is Jesus talking about here? Are we, his disciples, going to do bigger and better things than Jesus?

Yes and No. Remember that we are in the context of Jesus comforting his disciples before he goes to the cross. He is telling them about the things that will come. For those who have faith, they will participate in the work that Jesus has been doing, that is doing works that glorify the father. Jesus just talked about how "The Words I say to you are not just my own, Rather it is the Father, living in me who is doing his work." The promise here is not that people will surpass him in terms of his divinity, but perhaps more about spreading the gospel. You see at one point in Matthew 15, Jesus while talking to a Canaanite woman says that he was sent "only to the lost sheep of Israel" After his death and resurrection, he tells his disciples to go forth and make disciples of *all* nations with the great commission.

Again, this is not something that they will do alone. Jesus is leaving the disciples with the assurance that even though he is going he will send another. Part of the reason for Christ returning to the Father is so that the Father will send the Spirit in Jesus name and for that they should be glad. The Spirit, Jesus says will teach them "all things" and remind them of everything that he has said.

You see this in effect when Peter, a fisherman by trade originally, speaks to the crowd at Pentecost, filled with the Holy Spirit, he speaks clearly and persuasively about Christ, the crucifixion and what has happened over Easter, and the people are cut to the heart. Have a look in Acts 2v37 with me. There it reads:

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.

Did you notice that? It's a gift for all who call on Jesus for repentance – for all who are far off. That's us! We too can gain comfort from this message. This was a promise not only to the disciples, but to us as well – it's to those who have faith in Jesus. We shouldn't ever think that we are alone here. Jesus has gone to the father and is preparing a place for you. More than that, he has sent his Spirit to help us while we are here on earth. God knows the difficulties you face in the world. He knows how hard it can be to spread the word, that's why the spirit is there to remind us of Jesus and all he taught.

If you love Jesus, if you *trust* him, *obey* him by doing what he commanded. Love one another. Love each other in such a way that we remind not only our brothers and sisters in Christ of who Jesus is and what he did, but that the whole world can see that we are his disciples. Jesus was the greatest example of who God is in the world because he was God incarnate. We are called to follow him – to do the work he did, to proclaim the message we have here in the gospels. And we do it hand and hand with him through the power of the Spirit.

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Jesus said "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Do you believe that? Trust him. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Jesus loves you. He showed

it by his death and resurrection to pay for your sin, for my sin. Think about that as we approach Easter. And I pray that you will respond to him today, by following him, by sharing the gospel, by sharing in Jesus work. Amen.