

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter John 14:1-14

Father God, we pray that you would speak to us through your word this morning so that instead of our hearts being troubled we would know more of your peace and life. Amen

**Do not let your hearts be troubled.** Such familiar words of Jesus – but isn't it hard to take them into our lives and receive the peace that he offers. There's so much to trouble us during this lockdown; the isolation, loneliness, the deep down missing of being with people; the fear that those we love in hospitals or care homes will never come out alive. Grief has become more bitter without the opportunity to share a hug and show comfort. Those working on the frontline are overwhelmed with tiredness and emotional strain. Those working at home struggle to balance different ways of working and additional roles such as home schooling. Many fear the real possibility of losing their jobs and months of unemployment.

Tempers are frayed; frustrations loom large, financial worries surface ... when will it all end?

But even the thought of some restrictions being eased brings worries – will it be too early? How many will have lost the confidence to venture out? What will the new normal, when it eventually comes – actually be like? Will we like it? Cope with it?

Just as there's much to trouble us now so it was for the disciples when Jesus first spoke these words. They had no idea that all they had known and were enjoying with Jesus was going to be thrown into turmoil. True, Jesus had talked about going away but they didn't anticipate that he would die a violent death and be heard to utter "My God, my God why have you forsaken me". Their lives, their dreams, their hopes, their normal would all be shattered for good and they would discover just how weak and fearful they really were and be tormented by their own inadequacies and failures.

But it's at this very time that Jesus said – do not let your hearts to be troubled. He encouraged them to believe in him – when everything around would tell them not to! Although Jesus was going *from* them he said he would be coming back *for* them. Could they really believe that?

The disciples were familiar with the separation of a Jewish couple once they became betrothed which is more formal than the engagements we're used to. The groom had to leave his bride to be for a significant period of time while he worked to pay the dowry required by her parents and prepared a place for his bride to live. Typically he would build new rooms onto his father's house and make them ready to become their home. When they separated he promised - *once I have prepared a place for you, I will come back for you.* She had to keep waiting, uncertain of when he would complete everything and come for her.

Now the disciples had to trust that Jesus had it all in hand. I wonder how confident they were, and we are, of Jesus' promise. Has he forgotten us? Will he return for us?



**I am the Way**

Jesus has already paid the "dowry" through his death which was confirmed by his resurrection. Now he promises to take us beyond death, the worst that life can throw at us, to something far better which he is preparing for us. Does that fill us with hope? Can we trust him?

Jesus promised, not just to show us the way, but to be the way. May be, like me, you are making the most of your daily walk and have discovered local paths you never knew existed and you

don't know where they go! Then you question shall I turn around or keep going? If at that moment, which thankfully happened to me, someone comes towards you and tells you where that path leads as they've been along it you can then keep walking with confidence.

Jesus has gone before and not only is he promising to come back for us – but he says He is the way to know God as Father!

How much confidence we have in what Jesus says depends on who we consider him to be. I don't think the disciples really knew who he was at this time. No doubt a prophet, may be even their promised Messiah - but God himself in human form?

What struck me as I read and re-read these verses was just how many times Jesus talked about being one with the Father. *If you know me, you will know my Father also (v7); whoever has seen me has seen the Father (v9); I am in the Father and the Father is in me (v10, 11); the Father dwells in me (v10)...* Jesus wasn't just saying that he was the way to the Father, but he and the Father are one! And then, as if to emphasise it further, he claims to be the truth. We have to decide; was he deluded – or could he be God?

I thought I'd photograph an honest flower to illustrate Jesus claim to be the truth but despite thinking I'd seen several on my walks – could I find one? Everyone I took a picture of and then came home and compared with the books just wasn't the real thing and using something fairly similar just wouldn't be honest. So I've settled on the beautiful trinity flower just beginning to flower in my garden. Jesus claimed to be one with the Father – and the Holy Spirit!



**I am  
the  
Truth**

It's mind blowing to accept that Jesus is God - but I find it impossible to find another rational interpretation. The apostle Paul wrote Jesus is *the image of the invisible God* – and the author of the book of Hebrews says he is *the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being*. If we're going to trust anyone, then surely we can trust God himself?

But it still doesn't make it easy because life often doesn't work out the way we want. Can you imagine how hard it was for the disciples, hearing this and then watching Jesus die within days of him saying it? But that was Friday and Sunday was coming! If his death had been the end of the

story then there's no hope. But the resurrection changes everything! Jesus is the life!



Instead of everything ending, it was, in fact, only just beginning – but not in the way the disciples knew it; things would be vastly different. From then on, they would be the ones to share the message and do the works of the Father, and even greater works than Jesus! Wasn't that impossible?

But God was going to send the Holy Spirit to empower them and transform them. Instead of Jesus being with them, they wouldn't have to struggle alone as God himself would be dwelling within them. As they learnt to depend on the Holy Spirit and to recognise his promptings in their lives and his guiding in prayer they would see God at work and prayers answered. They would begin to experience life in all its fullness.

Can knowing God in this way really stop our hearts from being troubled? I think the more we are prepared to trust God the more we discover that it can! We can look forward with confidence knowing Jesus as the way; we can look back knowing Jesus came in truth as God in human form and made this intimate way of knowing God possible and we can experience Jesus as the life in everyday situations through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

My prayer is that we will experience more of the reality of this in our lives and enjoy his hope, confidence and peace.

Rev. E. Blackmore