

Comfort for Troubled Hearts

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[0 : 00] Well morning everyone, what a joyous occasion. Let me just tell you one of the many reasons why it encourages me this morning and I pray that it encourages you.

I was reading my own times this morning Psalm 145, wonderful Psalm. Right at the heart of it is one generation telling about the greatness of God to the next generation.

And God raising up a new generation of people to love and to worship him. And one of the amazing things I thought as Beth is standing here, she was two when the Lord brought us to this church.

She was two. And yet here's somebody declaring she wants to follow Jesus. Isn't that amazing?

Just to see the Lord raising up the next generation of folks to love and to worship him.

So John 14 is where we are this morning. So please do what you can to get that open in front of you. And track along with me. I need love. But I don't trust it.

[1 : 04] If I drop my game, my Chandler, and show you who I really am, you might notice me. But worse, you might notice me and leave me.

And I can't have that. I won't survive that. Now some of you might have got it from the name Chandler, but this is actor Matthew Perry writing in his autobiography.

I've just finished it. It is as funny as it is tragic. And read it and this is what you'll see. You'll see a man on the outside whose acting career keeps hitting new heights with friends.

But you'll also see a man who on the inside keeps hitting new depths as he struggles with addiction and finding his purpose and meaning in life.

And this quote out of the whole book really resonated with me. Because on some level, I reckon all of us know what he's getting at. Because it's what we do, isn't it?

[2 : 05] We default to doing it as human beings. We long to give the impression to the outside world that we have life sussed. We know what we're about.

We know where we're going. We know what we believe. There's no trouble in my life. And yet so often on the inside, we're this ball of insecurities and mistakes and hurts and secrets, sin and shame and worries about what tomorrow might hold.

And if truth be told, we don't have a clue what tomorrow is going to hold. And yet we're caught in this tension between projecting to the outside world that we're sorted and yet inside we don't have the answers. And I guess that's why people today talk about imposter syndrome.

We talk about faking it to make it. What's incredible if you look at the history of both of those ideas, concepts, phrases that they aren't about until the 1980s. It's funny, isn't it?

It's something about the way that we try and lift our lives as modern day people. And it can be paralyzing at times, can't it? Living with that tension, not knowing what to do to square that circle in our lives.

[3 : 23] And if that's you here today, then Jesus has, in this passage, some life-alteringly good news for each and every one of us.

You know, I used to think Christianity was essentially God congratulating good people. You spend enough time with Jesus and you learn that actually Christianity is God rescuing bad people.

Jesus specializes in being a savior to those who know they've got nowhere else to run but to him. You look at him in the gospels, he's strengthening weak people, he's lifting up broken people, he's comforting troubled people.

And Jesus longs and is willing to be a savior to those who will accept him. Do you know just how much he loves you today? See, John 14, it contains within it some theological truths that I take it that we should never scale the, we'll never touch the bottom of.

It should blow our minds. But at its heart is a really simple invitation that Jesus makes to all those who will read on. And it's found at verse 1.

[4 : 39] He simply says, believe in me. See, chapter 14 finds its place in this section of John's gospel that runs right through to the end of chapter 17.

And this is often called the farewell discourse. And this is Jesus preparing his disciples for what life is going to be like for them once he's gone.

He's explained, if you look at verse 33 of chapter 13, he's explained that he's leaving them, that he's going. And you can imagine the questions that are flying about their minds at that point.

How will we cope when Jesus isn't physically around? I mean, what a tag team partner to have in life. Talk about some kind of agony aunt. To be able to tag in when you've got questions in life.

How will we cope when he's not around? How are we going to stand for him when he's not by our side? How will we experience the joy of knowing him when he's not physically standing right beside us?

[5 : 44] And what we've got to see is that in John 14, the disciples are panicking. But Jesus, troubled as he is, he isn't.

And here he is speaking, verse 1 and verse 27, which kind of bookend this chapter and what it's all about. Here he is saying, do not be troubled.

And if you're troubled today, this is for you. Especially this is for you. You see, what does Jesus want them to know, troubled hearts?

What does he want us to know as we can eavesdrop in on this years, years later? What does he want us to know? We're going to see two things this week, two things next week. As we think about the future until he returns.

Here's the first one. And it's that our mistakes won't jeopardize the future. So the Bible is the inspired word of God.

[6 : 48] But make it clear in your mind that the chapter divisions aren't. Okay, so this is where the big number 14, if you've got it there in your Bible, it doesn't really do us any favors here.

Because this really is a continuation of everything that's happened in chapter 13. And particularly, if you have it there, where we left off in chapter 13.

Peter's reacting to the Jesus newsflash. And the adrenaline kicks into his body. Do you see it? I'll never deny you. They might scarp and run, but I'm going to be right here.

I'll never deny you, Lord. That's what he says. I'll never deny you. Why can't I dine with you? Don't underestimate me. But Jesus, knowing the mess of things that Peter is about to make, and to know that Peter is about to be almost crushed by his own failings and weakness.

He's saying, Peter, see when that happens. See when you find yourself in that place of making another mistake. Just remember what I said to you in this moment.

[8 : 01] Do you know what I love? And we reflected on this in small group, growth group this week. Or last week even. That I love that Jesus knows my mistakes before I've even made them.

I'm in what social scientists call the midlife years. And do you know what that means?

That means I've got a cracking vantage point to two directions in my life. And I look back the way. And I see all the mistakes that I have made in life.

And I think, that is a weighty, weighty thought. When I see all the mistakes, all the things I should have said, all the ways that I should have acted, all the things that I did and I didn't have a clue what I was doing, the ways that I was naive to life.

And I look back and the weight of those mistakes. And then what I also do is I look forward to all the mistakes that I don't, I haven't even made them yet. But Jesus knows them.

[9 : 04] He knows the mistakes I'm going to make as a parent. He knows when I'm going to lose my cool. He knows the mistakes I'm going to make as a pastor. He knows the mistakes I'm going to make as a neighbor.

He knows the mistakes I'm going to make as a friend. And the thought of the sins ahead of me, the mistakes I'm going to make, almost crushes me as well. And that's why, dear friends, you need to take great comfort in the fact that Jesus knows your mistakes in the past and he knows your mistakes in the future.

And get this, none of it has changed his mind about you. None of it has changed his mind about you. You see, Chandler's worried about people getting too close and seeing the real him.

But Jesus knows all of it. And there are no sweeter words for our souls to hear than Jesus saying to us, don't be troubled.

And Beth, you hear this today. Are you in? Is she in? You're there. Great. Because I remember getting baptized and thinking, you know, my life is going to be plain sailing from here on in. And just hitting the crash of my mistakes.

[10:17] Come back to these words again, again, again, again. We are saved by grace. And what takes these words and makes them more than just a thinking of you sympathy card from Clinton's? What gives gravity to the words?

Do you see Jesus says that he's going to prepare a place for us? And before he's talking about heaven, Jesus here is talking about going to the cross.

And that's the place where he's talking about going. That is the place where he is going to willingly die, bearing the punishment that all my mistakes and my sin and my rebellion against my creator deserve.

It's there that he goes willingly to make me right with God. And it's there, that's the place where we become sons and daughters of the living God because of our faith in him.

In other words, salvation is all of him. It's all of him. You ever had that experience when you, maybe think of it like this, when you go out with a friend for a meal and it comes to the end and it's time to pay and you both have that moment, don't you?

[11:29] You both want to pay and you come out with that line. What are you going to do with the bill? You're going to split the bill, right? Always love that. My dad still does that when I go out for a meal for him, gives it the whole thing.

She doesn't want your autograph, dad. It's okay. But he wants the bill. That's what he wants, okay? We always want to split the bill. And here's the thing about salvation. We don't split the bill with Jesus.

We don't split the bill with him. It's all of him. Jesus pays it all. It's why we love singing that song here, that old, old hymn. Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.

In the words of Sam Albury, what is right in him, talking to Jesus, far outweighs what is wrong in you. There is more grace in him than there is guilt in you.

He is better at saving than you are at sinning. So he says right here as he goes to the cross, he says, don't be troubled.

[12:35] And because he goes to the cross, he ascends to heaven. Do you not love the intimate and homely language that Jesus uses there to speak of heaven?

This is not the father's hotel. This is not a place where guests check in, they stay the night, they have a breakfast, they leave a review and trip advisor and they check out again.

This is the father's house. Children live there with their father. And listen, as I say that, I'm so conscious that for many of us here today, your home growing up was not a safe place.

It causes you to shudder as you think about it. If that's you here today, let me just say, I'm so sorry that that was your experience. I'm so sorry that was your, maybe the first place, the things you think about when you think of home aren't positive.

Let me just say, this will be everything that you and I could ever hope for in a home. A place of warmth, a place of protection, a place of communion, a place of delight.

[13:42] Of course, it's everything in a Bible story that Adam and Eve had with God before sin entered the human equation. How often we think of heaven as a place where our dreams come true, like heaven will be some kind of never-ending game of golf up in St. Andrews, or it'll be a week-long shopping trip in Milan.

But what makes heaven heaven? Do you see it in the text? It's what Jesus says at verse 3. Is that one day he will return and he will take us to who?

To himself. What makes heaven glorious is not so much what is there, it's who is there. Jesus says, I will return and take you to myself.

And no longer has that sentence finished and Thomas chips in at verse 5. And this guy always strikes me as a bit of a pragmatist when you meet him in the Gospels. Just wants stuff to make logical sense.

It's why at the end of this Gospel, he's going to say, unless I see the scars, I'm not going to believe, which is a legitimate thing to say. Right? He's the kind of guy who cuts his grass in straight lines.

[14:57] He's the kind of guy who labels different spices in his food cupboard. He's the kind of guy that we see here won't set out on a journey without knowing where he's going and without knowing how he's going to get there.

Do you see? He says, how? How will we get to that place? And Jesus says, unashamedly and unreservedly, that he is the way to God.

And with these words, let me just say really quickly in passing, Jesus poses a real problem to pluralism. You know, the belief that all roads kind of lead to God, that all religions are like different paths up the same mountain.

One path is called Buddhism, another is Islam, another is Christianity, but ultimately, whatever path you're on, we're kind of all going to reach the same summit. So we don't have time to examine the holes in that claim, but the next time someone tells you about a mountain, let me encourage you to listen to love and then reply respectfully and graciously, which is, of course, is always the way that true tolerance should be, that I hear what you're saying, but I don't think it works.

As I heard someone put it recently, if everyone is right, that means Jesus is right. And if Jesus is right, not everybody's right, only he is right, right?

[16:24] Let me do it again. If everyone is right, that means Jesus is right. And if Jesus is right, then only he is right and not everyone's right, right? That's what Jesus is saying here.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. He's the only way to the Father. Make no mistake that that is an exclusive claim, but also make no mistake that that couldn't be a more inclusive claim to anyone who comes to him, anyone who believes in him, shall not perish, but will have eternal life.

But that said, see in the context, this is not about apologetics. We've got to understand that this is about assurance. Jesus doesn't give Thomas a postcode.

Neither does Jesus give Thomas a personal trainer routine. Eight steps to follow to get the perfect room. Five rules to follow to get to heaven. No, no, no, he doesn't say that.

Doesn't give him a postcode. Doesn't give him a personal trainer routine. He gives him a person. And he says, look at me. Look at me.

[17:35] Friends, our mistakes will not jeopardize the future. And secondly, our limits won't hinder the mission. And here's what I love about Philip. As he chips in here, I love that he gets what the greatest privilege and joy in life is.

And we always love the God's great story, guys, you will know this quote because we start off every single session that we have as we think about God's purposes and the Bible story.

We always start with this. From Augustine, to fall in love with God is the greatest romance. to seek him the greatest adventure, to find him the greatest human achievement.

So often in the Christian life, we lose that, don't we? But it's so true. Philip wants to see the glory of God.

The privilege that Moses had, the one that Isaiah had, and maybe the one with Jesus still around, Philip senses that he can get in on the party as well.

[18:39] So he says, Jesus, almost before you go, could you just let us see, even a glimpse, just let us see the glory of the Father. And Jesus says, you have seen him.

In fact, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. As Jesus, as it were, allows us to be that little child who stares in the keyhole or cup to the wall, whatever your thing was, at the greatest and most joyous relationship that has ever existed.

The Father is in me and I am in the Father. Which means that if you are here today, and I know some of you are, you're thinking about this Christianity stuff.

What's it all about? How can I know what God is like? Right here is your answer. You want to know what God the Father is like. You need look no further than to Jesus.

You need to spend your time getting to know him as you read the Gospels. And as you do that, you will perfectly see what the Father is like. How often we think about God like that crazy uncle who comes to Christmas dinner with full of non-PC opinions and behavior.

[19:59] And Jesus comes along almost as the cool cousin, almost apologetically making up for his misdemeanors. That couldn't be any further from the truth. No, Jesus, friends, in all his beauty, in all his captivating glory, reveals a Father who is eternally worthy of our affection and of our attention.

Jesus shows us a picture of God who is far better, who is far more holy, who is far more loving and kind towards us than you and I would ever believe possible if it wasn't for the fact that Jesus said it was true.

And as we thought about last week, and if you weren't here last week, if you haven't listened to this sermon, get involved. It just stirred my soul for the glory of God. We thought about last week that to

gaze at Jesus is to be taking in the greatest view in the universe.

You pick up your Bible tomorrow morning. It's cold and wet outside. We're almost at December in Scotland and it's Baltic. You do that tomorrow in all your weaknesses and tears and all your questions and doubts with all your fears and anxieties and niggles as you look at the day ahead. The call is not to tick the box. The call is to still yourself in all the busyness of modern day life and behold Him.

[21 : 40] That to be a Christian is to be caught up into by the power and the presence of the Spirit that we will so wonderfully think about next week and that's why I want you to come back. It's to be caught up into the very life of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

What is evangelism if it's not just telling others about the beauty of this God who longs to save and thrill us with the person of His Son?

Always, sorry, and I take it that's precisely the greater works that the disciples will do if you're asking that question of the text. Because Jesus goes, this is exactly what they will do, greater works.

It's always a wonderful question to ask with the bits of the Bible that are more difficult to understand is to ask of them what they can't mean. Well, this can't be Jesus promising that His disciples will do better miracles than He did.

Like we're going to be able to turn water into better wine. I can't really comprehend what that would look like. Or that we're going to be able to raise the dead.

[22 : 57] I think in the context of John, the works and the words of Jesus, they work together as signs to help us see that true life is to be found by believing in His name.

And in the context of the story, after Jesus' death and resurrection and as He ascends, the Spirit is going to be sent, the very presence of Jesus, not being geographically tied anymore as it was when He was physically on earth.

And the greater work must be tied up with the fact that people the world over will come to find life in Jesus' name as they respond to the message of His life and work.

Now, if that was a mouthful, let me just put it like this. Because Jesus goes to the Father, people are going to become Christians and meet God and savor Him and God is going to move in ways far greater than what the disciples have seen up until this point.

Now, some of you might have seen the news this week about the rising migration levels in the UK.

[24 : 12] Did you see that? I'm trying to put this into context. The rising migration levels in the UK. Now, let me encourage us to put politically thinking about that aside and to think about that theologically.

As people from all over the world come to our country, find their home here, friends, what an opportunity. What an opportunity. You know, I was particularly, I was taken by the fact that the majority of people in that percentage rise are now coming from out with Europe to settle in the UK. You know, I was speaking to my friend Wayne from Crubbers the other day who was telling me how they have seen at Crubbers an influx of people coming from Hong Kong. Some people were already Christians, some people coming to hear about Jesus for the first time.

Just had this lovely moment when I thought about this enthusiastic pastor from New York is telling me about the church that he pastors in Edinburgh and now in his words one-tenth of his congregation are from Hong Kong.

My WhatsApp groups with pastors up and down the country at the minute are filled with stories about how people from Iran have been coming to churches in the UK and being introduced to Jesus and it's been great to get to know Pedram as he's been with us recently reading the Bible together and learning so much from Pedram.

[25 : 34] There was a stat this week, did you see it? I read it, about how the fastest growing church in the UK is the Chinese-speaking church. In fact, experts reckon that by 2030 the number of Christians in China will surpass the number of Christians in the US.

Some even put that as early as 2025, which is barely around the corner. Do you see it? The greater works that Jesus is talking about is he's no longer geographically tied as the Spirit takes the message and as it were just fans it into flame around the world.

People from all over the world, down the generations, coming to know Jesus for themselves.

Friends, our mistakes won't jeopardize the future. Be so clear on that today.

And our limits won't hinder the mission. And that's why Jesus ruling and reigning in heaven for us is better than Jesus walking and talking on earth beside us.

What comfort and confidence that we can take from him and his words today. And I take it as we finish, this should free us to be faithfully witnessing wherever we are.

[26 : 54] and this is where I finish just as we close with my friend Luke. And I bumped into Luke at a conference I was at a few weeks ago. I've not seen Luke in 10 years since we did the Cornhill course together 10 years ago.

And he was telling me just one of those questions when you haven't seen somebody in so long. You just say, what have you been up to? You know, kind of keep it really narrow like that. Yeah, what have you been up to? And he told me about how after he graduated he spent some time working at B&Q; in Aberdeen.

And in his first week he accidentally sent a brand new kitchen due for a family in Oxford to a family in Aberdeen. Right?

Big mistake. And I texted him this week and said, how did that go? And he simply said it was a great day for all involved. Mistake. Mistake.

But he kept on going. Loving his colleagues, speaking to them about Jesus. But the same questions that I know so many of us here today when you're witnessing in your place of work wherever you are you ask as well.

[28 : 02] Do people see? Does anybody even notice? Is anybody listening? Is this making any kind of difference? Eventually God calls Luke back to church work again and it comes to his final day on the job.

And those questions that he's been asking well, they kind of get answered because everybody in his workforce chips in to get him a gift. And they buy him a pastor's key ring.

They buy him a bag of pasta. They buy him an Amazon voucher. And they buy him I love the things that people buy you by the way when it's their last day. And they buy him a really nice leather Bible. They've all signed it with his initials stamped on the front.

And it wasn't so much the gifts I think got him. It was what people said that meant the world to him. They just said thank you. Thank you. And so through Luke and his witness knowing Jesus and walking with him personally as folks as he dealt with them and he was trying to be as honest as possible about his faults and failings but as honest as possible about the forgiveness and life that he's found in Jesus.

I love the fact that there's a whole bunch of folks in a warehouse at B&Q; up in Aberdeen who've heard the gospel. And let's not underestimate the things that God can do as we just sow the seed.

[29 : 22] Do you know and just as we close there is no freer place for our hearts to be than resting in these words of Jesus right here when he says do not let your hearts be troubled.

And just hear that today. Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God believe also in me. Let's pray will we? And so heavenly father I'm so conscious that so many of us will be coming at this from different places today.

And lord I ask that your spirit that he would be at work in our hearts bringing the comfort and the challenge the reassurance that comes from Jesus' words as we've heard them today.

We just thank you for the celebration that today has been. Father we thank you for the gift of new life. We thank you for the gift as it were of spiritual life.

And father I pray that you would just stir our hearts with a greater affection for the Lord Jesus as we leave here today. Fully confident in the truth of his promises and the beauty of his person and work.

[30 : 35] So father we thank you for your commitment to us your people today. Be with us for the rest of this Sunday we pray in Jesus is worthy and in his wonderful name we ask.

Amen. Amen.