

Sunday, May 3, 2026

Fifth Sunday of Easter A

John 14:1-14 (v.1-3)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

My dear friends,

Jesus says,

"Let not your hearts be troubled." (John 14:1a)

Is that easier said than done?

"Don't let your heart be troubled?"

Because,

if I'm honest,

sometimes my heart gets troubled.

And if you're anything like me,

I bet your heart gets troubled sometimes, too.

Now,

we're not talking about arrhythmia
or high cholesterol.

We're talking about worry
and upset.

The boat is being rocked.

Anxiety, alarm, anger
and sorrow.

Bothered.

Scared.

Vexed.

Annoyed.

That kind of heart trouble.

When something wrecks your peace.

That kind of troubled heart.

There are many reasons

for troubled hearts.

We have trouble at work.

Trouble at home.

Trouble at school.

We face troubles with health.

Trouble with our friends.

Troubles with our families.

There are troubles at church.
There's trouble
throughout the country.
Trouble all over the world.

Some troubles come and go quickly.
Others last longer.
Days.
Months.
Years.
Life in a fallen world,
as we all know,
is full of trouble.

But in all this trouble,
Jesus gently reminds us,
*"Let not your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God;
believe also in Me."* (John 14:1)
It's Easter!
Christ is risen!
Easter gives us reason
to rejoice,
no matter the circumstances.

We said in today's Psalm:
*"I will praise the Lord
as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God
while I have my being."* (Psalm 146:2)
"All my life" –
that includes the times of troubles.
But
it can be hard
to muster up those praises
in trouble.
It's not easy
to sing when doubt,
despair, fear, or anger rise up.

So,
 what do we do
 when difficulties threaten
 to trouble our hearts?
 How will our hearts be at peace
 in a troubled world?
 When trouble comes—
 how do we apply our faith in God?
 Jesus gives hope:
 we cling to His promises,
 like today's assurance
 that He is preparing a place for us.

How are you handling the troubles you face in life?

1. The Stoic Way

My friends,
 The world offers a variety
 of suggestions
 to keep your heart
 from being troubled.
 One way is the Stoic way.

The stoic way is a bit
 like mind over matter.
 It is the stiff upper lip,
 and the water off a duck's back way.
 The idea is
 that resilience can be built
 through practising self-control
 and self-mastery.

Over time,
 you manage trouble
 by willing negative emotions away.
 Like a Jedi,
 you let go
 of attachments
 and passions.

The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius
was a fan of this approach.
He suggested that,
with enough determination,
we are can bring the ship of our soul
into "the untroubled peacefulness
of a waveless bay."

This path has its attractions.
Stern resignation has a kind of nobility and integrity.
It's strong.
It's tough.
It's undeterred.

But it also doesn't work.
Why?
It relies completely on us.
And as much as we'd like to think otherwise,
we are limited.
While the Stoic way relies
on our limited strength,
God's peace is unlimited
and available
to us
through trust
in His promises.
God offers true peace.

Moreover,
this Stoic way costs too much.
It's a philosophy
that relies on being passionless.
No hopes,
no desires,
no attachments,
just resignation
and duty.

Removing all emotion
from life may lessen the sting
of pain and sorrow.
But at the same time,
it removes something essential
to humanity.
We are emotional creatures.
We are created
to feel a wide range
of emotions and experiences.
A waveless bay is fine for ships.
But for humans,
it is more like a stagnant pond.

Peace isn't numbness.
Peace isn't emptiness.
Peace isn't a restriction.

Peace is trust.
Peace is fullness.
Peace is abundance and freedom.
If we want
to exercise godly self-control
in the face of trouble,
the answer is trust.

Trusting means
actively believing God's promises
and relying on His strength
rather than our own.
Trusting involves praying,
turning to Scripture,
and grounding our decisions
in confidence in Christ.
If we want to be courageous
and undeterred
in trouble,
trust in Jesus is the key.

As baptized Christians,
 we exercise our Spirit-given will
 to trust God.
 In trouble,
 we choose
 to go to God's Word.
 We choose
 to believe His promises
 with the faith God gives us.
*"Let not your hearts be troubled.
 Believe in God;
 believe also in Me."*

2. The Pleasure Way

My friends,
 A second popular way is the Way of Pleasure.
 This way is the opposite of the first.
 The Way of Pleasure doesn't repress emotion
 or ignore feelings.
 Instead,
 it dives headfirst
 into whatever makes you feel better.

Pleasure attempts
 to overcome pain
 by filling your heart
 and calendar
 with whatever pleases you.
 You pursue your passions full tilt.
*"Drown yourself in self-gratification,"
 says the Way of Pleasure.*

I must confess,
 as much as I'd like to be the tough-guy stoic,
 I fall more in this camp.
 I stress eat.
 I mean,
 what problem can't be solved
 with a cinnamon bun?

Or a bag of chips?
(So,
go easy on me,
and I might lose some weight).

The appeal
to this approach is
that it is easy
and often works.
At least
for **small** things.

I recently read
about a couple
who kept getting into big arguments.
However,
they realized that their fights started
with the small annoyances
that come with sharing life
with another person.
So,
when little things started to annoy them,
they'd suggest engaging
in enjoyable activities together.
They would go on outings
or pursue hobbies they both liked.
And the slight annoyance would fade away
and be forgotten.

That works for little things.
The way of pleasure works
for little things.
But not
for **major** things.
After a funeral,
it doesn't matter
how perfect the date square is.
When you're done munching,
the coffin is still full.

When trouble gets serious,
a little pleasure can only serve
to distract.
It doesn't address the problem.
You can't save a sinking ship
by stuffing the leak
with cotton candy.
When we seek pleasure
to distract us
from the big problems,
we often make things worse.
That pursuit can end up in
addiction,
neglect,
and lack of self-control.
And those have never helped anyone.

If our hearts are to be untroubled,
we need
to address problems meaningfully.
What better way
to face death
than by faith in the one
who rose from the dead?
The one
who emptied graves?
What better way
to address the aching hole
in your life
than by trusting Him
who promised to pour His love
into our hearts?
What better way to address problems
than by trusting the Lord
of heaven and earth?
*"Let not your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God;
believe also in Me."*

3. The Work Way

But, my friends,
pleasure isn't the only way we seek distraction.

Rather than pleasure,
some people throw themselves
into work.

Like the Way of the Stoic,
there seems to be some nobility there.

Our society puts a high value
on productivity and output.

So people often throw themselves
into distractions that reward.

Your girlfriend dumps you?

You replace that pain
with the gym.

The Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness
from leg day will distract you.

It's a pain to be proud of.

And everyone admires the gains!

Is there trouble at home?

It can often be easier to work
than face the struggles at home.

So you work longer and longer hours.

What a good employee!

Happy boss.

Happy bank account.

Bringing in the big bucks.

But the problems at home grow
with neglect.

So perhaps the Work Way isn't perfectly noble.

Rather than doing the hard work
of addressing our problems,
work is just another attempted escape.

Far from dealing with the trouble,
this approach only compounds it.

The heart isn't untroubled;
it's just ignored.

When you work to distract,
you're just a hamster in a cage,
running on a wheel.
Trapped
and getting nowhere.
Perhaps it would be better
to "*Let not your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God;
believe also in [Jesus].*"
After all,
Jesus is the one who said,
"*Come to me,
all who labour
and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28)

4. The Trust Way

So,
my friends,
what do we do?
What do the people
of the cross do
when life threatens
to trouble their hearts?
If all Jesus had said was,
"*Don't let your hearts be troubled,*"
we would be in trouble.
But
Jesus went on to say,
"*trust in God;
trust also in Me.*"

The correct way

to an untroubled heart is the Trust Way.
 We actively depend on God's promises,
 look to Jesus,
 and let faith guide our decisions
 and responses.
 We understand that God is
 in control
 and for us.
 When we trust
 that Jesus has got us,
 then our hearts can have peace.

"Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God;

believe also in Me.

In My Father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so,

would I have told you

that I go

to prepare a place

for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again

and will take you

to Myself,

that where I am you may be also..." (John 14:1–4a)

Jesus has your future all sorted.

The things that alarm you,

He has already worked out.

He will bring you through.

And that gives you the courage

to face your troubles head-on.

Cause in the end,

you will be in the Father's house.

With Jesus.

Trust isn't another cop-out.
It's not another escape.
Trusting in Jesus
won't make your all troubles go away.
But you won't be alone
in your trouble.
Your heart has someone
to rely on.

When I worked in the trades,
it was much easier being an apprentice
when the journeyman was there.
I just did what he said.
The buck stopped
with the journeyman.
If things went poorly,
I didn't have to worry about it.
That was the journeyman's job.

Likewise,
how all my troubles work out is Jesus' job.
The buck stops with Him.
And He can actually handle it.

Jesus knows trouble firsthand.
He's been there and done that.
Jesus is the man of sorrows.
Jesus is the one rejected by His own.
He suffered trouble to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
But that didn't finish Him.

On the third day,
Jesus rose from the dead.
He defeated sin and death.
He defeated all troubles.
His resurrection proved
everything He said is correct and true.

Including:

"Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God;

believe also in Me.

In My Father's house are many rooms." (John 14:1–2a)

The Way of Trust is honest
about trouble.

It faces the reality of trouble
in a sinful world.

It picks up the cross
and follows Jesus
through trouble.

In trouble,
it clings to Christ's resurrection.

It's like that hymn:

"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.

Because He lives, all fear is gone.

Because I know He holds the future,

and life is worth the living just because He lives."

The risen one promises

to see His people through their trouble.

Jesus promises to restore all things in the end.

St. Stephen faced trouble in our First Reading.

He faced it in the Way of Trust.

He saw Jesus in the Father's house.

And He continued
in courageous faith.

Courage a Stoic would admire.

Trust didn't make Stephen's trouble disappear.

He didn't turn the crowd's frowns upside down.

Stephen's trouble ended his life.

But it didn't end Stephen.

In death,

Jesus sustained Him.

And when Stephen fell asleep,

Jesus received him.

Stephen came to the Father's house,
 where there are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)
 And Jesus has promised
 to raise Stephen's broken body from the dead.
 When the trumpet sounds,
 Stephen is going to be there.
 And altogether,
 we will greet Jesus
 when He comes again.

My friends, your Jesus is alive.
 He has overcome every trouble.
 He promises,
*"I will come again
 and will take you
 to Myself,
 that where I am
 you may be also."*
 That promise is enough
 to carry you through
 whatever trouble this week brings.

So when your heart is troubled,
 don't run first to distractions—
 run to Christ.
 This week,
 I'm going to try something different.
 If I feel stressed,
 I'm not going
 to search the house for snacks.
 I'm not going
 to grab a bag of chips.
 I'm going to grab my Bible.
 And there,
 I will find Jesus
 and His promises.
 And He won't let my heart be troubled.

Because He will say,
*"Trust in God;
 trust also
 in Me."*

If your heart is troubled,
 open His Word
 and hear Him say,
*"Trust in God;
 trust also in Me."*

Keep ready the Scriptures
 that have comforted God's people
 for generations:
"The Lord is my shepherd... I will fear no evil,"
 and Philippians 4:6-7:
*"Do not be anxious about anything,
 but in everything by prayer
 and supplication
 with thanksgiving
 let your requests be made known to God.
 And the peace of God,
 which surpasses all understanding,
 will guard your hearts and your minds
 in Christ Jesus."*

Turn to simple,
 faithful practices.
 Read the Word
 and pray what you read.
 Pray the Psalms.
 Pray the Lord's Prayer thoughtfully,
 trusting God hears you.
 Say "Amen" with confidence,
 knowing your Father answers.
 Sing a hymn.
 Seek encouragement
 from a fellow Christian.
 Gather for worship,
 even when you don't feel like it.

These are the ways
Christ steadies your heart
with His Word and Sacraments.

So, how will you face the week?
Hear His words again:
*"Let not your hearts be troubled...
I will come again."*

*May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ
Jesus, amen.*