

“Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled”

John 14:23-29

13 May 2007, 6 Easter C

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

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John 14:23-29

Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

”I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

Prayer.

It is said,

“Be careful what you do,
for our actions often have
unintended consequences.”

No one knew this more than Judas,
the unseen questioner in today's
scripture passage.

Jesus had just shared bread and cup,
washed feet,
and taught about servant leadership.
Jesus had just out-ed Judas
as the one who would betray him
to the authorities.

“After receiving the piece of bread,
he immediately went out.

And it was night.” (John 13:30)

Judas had done his bidding,

and, while unrecorded,

slipped back into the midst
of the Upper Room gathering.

Judas asks Jesus this question:

“Lord, how is it

that you will reveal yourself to us,
and not to the world?” (John 14:22)

Likewise, a wise professor of Theology
once said,

“Be careful what you believe,
for many of our beliefs also have
unintended consequences.”

We say we believe in a God of mercy,
for example,

but as soon as mercy is lifted up,

- say, mercy for the prisoner -

then crime victims rise up and cry,

“Justice! What about justice?”

A just God wouldn't allow
people to become the victims of crime
without any justice.

Every belief comes with a price.

“Be careful what you believe,

for many of our beliefs also have
unintended consequences.”

So many of us

have heaven on our minds

24-seven, three sixty-five.

Eternal life is so pervasive,

this hope and belief that

when all Christians die,

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we all go to heaven
to live in eternal bliss,
that we never take time
to recognize the fact
Jesus is talking about
bringing the Heavenly Father
back to us.
Jesus isn't sending us to heaven;
he is sending heaven to us,
that he and the Heavenly Father will
come to us,
together with the Holy Spirit,
to take up dwelling in our hearts.
God will make his home
with us, and in us.
Heaven doesn't begin in some future time,
but in the right here and now,
when the Spirit of Pentecost,
takes up habitation in each of our lives.

The unintended consequence is this:
when we exercise our free will
and think, say, or do something
that is contrary to God's will,
God is there.
God is present when we decide
to turn our back towards him.
Remember that pick-up driver,
who in a fit of rage,
passes you and flips you the finger?
God is there.
Remember that text message
you received during class,
the one from your buddies
that has the test answers?
God is there.
How about that fight you had
with your spouse?
God is there.
Kicked the dog?
It is just like kicking God.

Talk about pressure!
This isn't peer pressure,
that would be too easy.

This is divine pressure
to think, say, and do the right thing;
the will of God.

But consider for a moment
what God has at stake.
When God moves into your house,
into your life,
into your heart;
heaven is established in the here-and-now
within you.
A beach-head is created
where upon God
can begin to spread
and grow his heavenly kingdom
to others here on earth,
just like we petition
every time we innocently pray
our Lord's Prayer.

You see,
for the Christian,
who has God dwelling within,
the sting of death is removed.
Other than the pain
of a brief,
momentary absence,
death is relegated to
third class status, or less.
Death simply becomes
the threshold
across which we step
when these temporal
bodies wear out.
But, we've already
gone to heaven,
because heaven began years ago
when the Holy Spirit moved into our life
and set up his temple.

There are many quotations and definitions
concerning morality,
but one aptly applies to our passage today:
morality is what a person does in private,
when nobody is looking,

as opposed to the
actions done in public,
before the eyes of others.
When God is dwelling in you,
and with you,
there is no private time.
There is no opportunity
to be “just a little bit sinful.”
For God,
the stakes are far to great.
It is all or nothing.
It is heaven or hell.
The emergence of God's
heavenly kingdom,
on earth as it is in heaven,
is ultimately dependent
upon every one of us
in whom God has taken up
residence.

The chain is as strong
as the weakest link.
Quality management systems of today
(you've heard of ISO 9000, haven't you?)
ensure better quality in the products we buy.
One in a million defects
may be the threshold
by which an organization takes pride,
but if you are that one consumer in a million
who got that defective part,
one hundred percent of the products are flawed.

Likewise with God.
When Jesus comes into our heart,
the benefit of heaven
begins to be revealed,
but the responsibility
that goes along with
God's gracious gift
is to lead a life that makes
our guest proud,
a life that is lived consistent
with the will of God
- a life befitting of a God -
who sees through our eyes

and works through our hands.
If we allow ourselves
to be that one defective part,
just for a one little bit
of self-gratification,
we place at risk
all of God's greater plan
to bring God's kingdom
on earth to completion.
Breaking the will of God
has unintended consequences that
go far beyond
what our feeble,
little minds can comprehend.
The risks we take
for just a little mucking around in sin,
are far too great,
the consequences are far more
than we are prepared to accept,
that the call for righteous living
- within whom dwells Christ -
can not be understated,
can not be under emphasized,
can not be ignored.

What we do,
as well as what we believe,
does makes a difference.
Jesus is counting on you.
And the reward?
Oh, my.
It is heavenly;
and it begins today.
Amen.