

John 14:1-14

We all hate “Goodbye’s right? It’s mother’s day and so I can’t help but think of my mom, and, let me tell you, there’s someone who doesn’t like goodbyes. Between my brother and I, let alone her grandkids, when it’s time for her or us to head back home, how the tears flow! But, lets not just pick on her, I think we all know that feeling. Goodbyes can be hard. Some are down right cruel, like saying goodbye to loved ones who leave for a long time – like at the funerals. Talk about tears, sadness, pain, and troubled hearts. That’s a tough “goodbye.”

The disciples knew all about goodbyes. They lived in this broken world just like us so they had said their goodbyes before. To the friends and family after the celebrations... and at the funerals. Then they started following Jesus around and began to think maybe there was some hope after all, maybe the goodbyes we say don’t have to be so final. But then, just before our reading today, Jesus tells them he is going to leave them. Jesus’ teaching that starts in John chapter 14 is called “the farewell discourse.” It is Jesus in the Upper Room with his disciples the day before he will be crucified, and he is saying goodbye. They had followed him for years, over hill and dale, all over Israel but now he is going to a place they cannot follow. So he is saying goodbye.

And we hate goodbyes. And the disciples were no different. So the disciples’ hearts’ were troubled. They were sad and confused. “Where are you going? Why are you going? How do we get there? We don’t want to say goodbye we want to be with you. Aren’t you going to take your glory first?” And their questions were reasonable. Perfectly reasonable to ask a mentor, a friend, when they say they are leaving. “For how long? Why? Can I come with?”

So I think we can empathize with the disciples on that level. But even deeper, Jesus is *our* mentor too, no, our Savior, Shepherd, and friend too. Do we ever ponder the same questions the disciples did? “Jesus, why did you leave? When are you coming back - it’s been 2000 years? Why not come back once in a while to help us out and to show everyone you are real? Where are you Jesus, how do we get there? Show us something!” I’ve got sympathy for the disciple’s questions in the farewell discourse, I have sympathy for these questions too.

Because they show a longing for the Lord, they show a longing for the fulfilment of Jesus’ promises. Those disciples wanted Jesus on a throne, little did they know, even though he told them plainly, he would go to a cross first. Our questions show a similar longing for the Lord and a fulfillment, which is pious, and perhaps reasonable. It is obvious there is a creator God, this is no accident, matter doesn’t make itself, but we still look for a fulfilment of his grace when we see pandemics and starvation and we see the Christian and Atheist alike fall victim to fear, relationship strife, sickness, and death. “Isn’t God supposed to work for our good? Where is he!? Is he mad at us? Is he the true God at all?”

So Jesus speaks to calm them and us. He says, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” Because he does not go to a cross in vain. He does not leave them or us to abandon us. He goes for our good. To make all things ready for us. Like a husband might go to the next town first to get a job and find a place to live. Then he comes back for the family. So also our Lord goes to prepare the way for his bride, the Church. And he tells the disciples as much. “I go the Father’s house to prepare a place for you.” And, “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” Thomas wants to know the way there, and

perhaps we do too, “How do you get to heaven?” A rich young man asked it more pointedly, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” But it misses the point. We don’t go there on our own power, we don’t need a secret map to find the way, He said he would come and take us there. We don’t need to know the directions, he’s driving. We simply trust he knows the way and will see us safely there. And he will.

How can we know? Well, a couple reasons: First: Because he is One with the Father as he tells us in our reading. If you’ve seen Jesus, you’ve seen the Father. You’ve seen true God and his powerful, yet merciful character. And if Jesus has been around since before time, since he knows intimately the courtrooms of the Father, I think he can see us safely there. Second, we can trust him because we, unlike the disciples, know the truth and power of the resurrection.

Jesus made all these promises to the disciples on Maundy Thursday but the very next day he’s dead. How is Jesus the way if his way led to a cross and a tomb? How is he the truth when he promised victory but experienced the ultimate defeat, death? And how in the world is he the life as he lay lifeless? What is he preparing? A dwelling place or cross? How is he going to come back? The goodbye seemed pretty final to them.

But that goodbye was only for a little while. He comes to them again, alive again. And then they began to see all his promises were true. How his departure, his death, was to secure for us, us who doubt his promises, it was to secure for us forgiveness and payment. And his resurrection showed his power. He has been at creation, he has been in the throne room of the Father, he has gone through the grave! Where has he not adventured? Where has he not conquered? Is he going

to get lost? Is he going to lose us? It's nonsense! He is the champion of life. And, yes he is ascended so we no longer walk and talk with him and that is sad, but he has not left us as orphans. He prepares for each of us, he is with each of us in Word, body and blood, and he will take us each to himself. Through the valley of the shadow of death or when he is done waiting, waiting that more may be saved, of course, and comes to us visibly? That's up to him. We, however, can rest secure and live secure, because we know he will see us safely there.

And that means, for all those in Christ, you and me, our goodbyes are never final either. Well, I guess some of them are. Because, thanks to Jesus we can, one day, finally say goodbye to the sins. We can say goodbye to the sicknesses, to the effects of age, to the fears and doubts, and the tornadoes. And we say goodbye to them for good. But the goodbyes we hate saying, to the loved ones, to life? No, in Jesus they aren't final goodbyes. They are "see you later." Because those in Christ go to a place that has been prepared for them. They have a promise of a reunion and resurrection. That is the Gospel that calms the troubled heart.

That Gospel that gives us courage to our hearts in the midst of sickness or health, poverty or abundance. We can have courage because the bridegroom, Jesus, has gone ahead to get the feast ready. And he has not abandoned us but comes to us as we taste his goodness, as we hear his word. Yes, we can know he doesn't hate us, or forsake us, because he has already died for us! Why would he leave us now? The price has been paid.

So in our reading today, Jesus says, "see you later," to his disciples and he tells them it is for their good, for our good. "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.” May we, every day, live knowing Christ is with us, and this presence will be realized even more on the day when he brings us to himself. He has promised it, and he is trustworthy, because he is risen, just as he said. Amen.