

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

Jesus' disciples were troubled. Jesus' hour had come, and He "*was going back to God*" (John 13:3), a destination that required Him to pass through rejection, and suffering, and cross, and death—"*a living stone rejected by men*" (1 Pet. 2:4). Although He had washed their feet, yet not all of them were clean, Jesus had told them (John 13:11). One of them was going to betray Him, He said (John 13:21), and Jesus told Peter explicitly that he was going to deny Jesus three times (John 13:38).

Jesus' disciples were troubled — you can understand why. They were troubled, and Jesus knew it. "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*"

Jesus' disciples are troubled. We're in the midst of a pandemic! This coronavirus is super contagious, and there's no vaccine for it. We might get sick! We might die! Can't go to work! Must close my business! Can't go to church! Must stay home!

Did you see Governor Cuomo of New York's report the other day? NBC news reported it. "'This is a surprise,' the governor told reporters 'Sixty-six percent of the people [recently hospitalized coronavirus] were at home, which is shocking to us.' ... 'They're not working; they're not traveling,' Cuomo said of these ... patients. 'We were thinking that maybe we were going to find a higher percent of essential employees who were getting sick because they were going to work — that these may be nurses, doctors, transit workers. That's not the case. They were predominantly at home.'" Interesting. All those "hunker down at home" orders, and at home is where most of the COVID-19 patients had caught the virus.

The report continued, quoting Kumi Smith, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Minnesota: "[most] people [are] at home, [and] 'if it turns out, ... [that the] (coronavirus) [is] still getting into a lot of homes (of non-frontline workers), then that percentage is interesting, it's troubling,'" he said. (David K. Li, "A 'shocking' two-thirds of patients recently hospitalized in NY had been staying home," NBC News, May 6, 2020). Jesus' disciples and epidemiologists are troubled.

But Jesus has something to say to our troubled hearts: "*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.*" Jesus called the twelve to place their trust in Him in the face of cross and death and betrayal and denial. The deacons got the message, at least Stephen did. Boldly, he proclaimed, "*you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it,*" YOU "*betrayed and murdered*" "*the Righteous One*" (Acts 7:52-3). Although he was subjected to the injustice of an enraged mob, still boldly trusting in Jesus, he "*fell asleep,*" praying "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*" (Acts 7:59-60). And what Jesus taught the disciples of

old, he teaches us today. He calls upon us still to believe in Him in the face of our fear of illness and death and job loss and hunger, for in Him we have already overcome! *“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore”* (Rev. 7:16); *“death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away”* (Rev. 21:4).

“Believe in God; believe also in me,” Jesus said. Why? Because, He said, *“I’ve got this under control.”* Because *“In my Father’s house are many rooms.”* *“I am not departing ‘out of this world to the Father’* (John 13:1) just to relax at my Father’s side. No, I’m going so that I can *‘prepare a place for you,’* a place where you can be with Me and with my Father forever.

For indeed, Jesus said, *“this is the very reason I came, and in this way shall I be glorified. I came as the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15), a seed destined to fall into the earth and die and bear much fruit”* (John 12:24). We are this fruit, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26), and we will at length be gathered into the Lord’s harvest barn (Matt. 13:30). Thus, Jesus said to His disciples, *“I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”*

But again, Jesus didn’t say this just for the sake of those twelve gathered with Him in the upper room that night of His betrayal. He said it for the sake of all God’s people whom He would call *“out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* He said it to *“a people for his own possession,”* those whom He would choose for Himself, those whom He would build upon the Stone rejected into a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. These are the *“righteous ones”* who can look forward to shining *“like the sun in the kingdom of [our] Father”* (Matt. 13:43), as Jesus explains. It’s a righteousness *“which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith,”* as St. Paul teaches. *“[T]hat I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead”* (Phil. 3:9-11).

This is what Jesus promises to those who believe in Him—not that we won’t get sick. Friends what was all this “flattening of the curve” supposed to do? Keep us from getting sick? No! Until there’s a vaccine, we’ll all likely get this virus! The flattening of the curve was to keep our health care system from being overwhelmed with so many sick people all at once that it couldn’t handle them—so that, people wouldn’t have to be turned away and so die from lack of care. But let’s be honest: if the doctors are right about how contagious this virus is and given our lack of immunity, you are going to get sick with this virus. Pictorially, the area under the curve with the big amplitude, and the area under the flattened curve is the same—in that model, the same number of people are going to get the virus.

And in the spirit of being honest...of truth-telling, let's admit this, too: we're going to die. We don't know when, but we're all going to die. But Jesus comforts His disciples with His promise that though we die, yet shall we live (John 11:25). For, indeed, we do know the way to the Father. That way may be hard, as we are experiencing right now, and the gate may be narrow (Matt. 7:14). Our hearts may be troubled, but we know the way. It's Jesus. Believe in Him.

Be not dismayed; shake off your doubts. Jesus is faithful. He is the ultimate truth-teller. He is the truth in the flesh, who came conveying grace and truth (John 1:14). Speaking with the Father's own authority, we know Jesus' word is truth, and the truth sets us free (John 8:32).

And you know what His word says; we heard it last week. "*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10). Today, Jesus said it more succinctly, "*I am ... the life.*" And He's not talking here about material wealth and prosperity as the prosperity preachers proclaim. He's talking about resurrection and life and going to the Father.

So, are you troubled, O disciples, by what's going on? These are perilous times, so it's not surprising. Where shall you turn? To social media? What a jungle that is! To alcohol or drugs? These mind and body numbing substances don't offer lasting relief. No! Listen to Jesus. Turn to Him. "*Believe in God; believe also in me.*" Trust that Jesus who was lifted up on the cross and died and was planted in the ground also rose from the dead and ascended to the Father. Trust that He who promised to prepare a place for you has done it. Trust that He who promised to come to take you to Himself will do it. Trust in Jesus: the only Way to the Father, the Truth that sets you free, the Resurrection and the Life. Let Jesus calm your hearts in these troubled time, for Christ is risen! Alleluia!

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.