

May 10, 2020 Sermon  
John 14:1-14

I remember being so excited, after high school graduation, about going to college. I was going to pursue my interests in music, teach, perform and maybe someday direct a college choir. Truly, that was my intent...my goal. (This was well before the thought of being a pastor ever entered my mind.) And, even though I was excited about leaving home and going to college, there was still that nagging in the back of my mind that I would be somewhat on my own.

It couldn't be all that bad, I thought. A friend of mine from high school was going to be my roommate, we had some of the same interests, and so it would be like leaving home without leaving home...AND I wasn't all that FAR from home, so I could go home on weekends if I wanted to.

As it turns out, I liked it so much, mom would call at times, wondering when I might be coming home for the weekend.

Fast forward to May of my senior year in college. Different story, and yet not so different. Being in school, living on campus for four years in a row with the exception of summers at home (sort of), was very comforting. Sure, there was studying and practicing, and then student teaching and meetings and group rehearsals and recitals, but it was all pretty cozy.

Everything we needed was right there on campus or in town. Friends were around when we *needed* them and when we *didn't* need them. We had *three* meals a day, a *warm* place to sleep, and our *pick* of churches to attend. Most of the tough decisions that had to be made, were discussed with parents, and easier decisions were made and *never* discussed with my parents by me. It was a world that I didn't particularly want to leave.

It was sad to say good-bye to familiar routines and beloved friends, and wonderful singing that always lifted me up when I was down, but these things had to be let go in order to move on. This would *not* be the *scariest* part of my life by *far*, but it was very emotional, because moving on...moving forward, any kind of change, small or large, will always be emotional, no matter your age.

One thing that has remained constant, is my belief in God. By the time I graduated from college, I had gone to *lots* and **lots** of different churches, and they may have had different doctrines, different ideas of how to worship, but the emphasis in all the churches, was that God is *always* with us.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. 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, so that where I am, there you may be also.”

Jesus was trying to comfort his disciples while trying to share with them that he wouldn’t physically *be* with them anymore. Here was a man who had walked beside them...a man they had followed, who taught them, who shared stories with them, who *oftentimes* made them *think*, and he was also someone who could get aggravated with his disciples, while, at the *same* time, showing them compassion.

Thomas asked Jesus how it was *possible* to know where he was going when *they* didn’t know the way. Jesus tries to explain that knowing God comes from knowing *Jesus*, and then *Philip* demands that they have *proof*, saying, “Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

Aggravation sets in for Jesus as he responds to Philip by saying, “Have I been with you *all this time*, and you *still* don’t know me? I just got finished telling Thomas that whoever *knows* me...whoever *sees* me has seen the Father. *I* may speak, but it is *God* who gives me the words to say.”

“Do not let your hearts be troubled...In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.” These are words and scripture that are most often read at funerals, but stop and think about how many *dwelling* places there are for us *here* and *now*, and we know that God is with us in *all* of them.

When God talks about God's kingdom, we're not necessarily hearing about heaven because God's kingdom is right *here and now...on earth*. Jesus was born and God came to earth. Emanuel, God with us.

Jesus, in speaking with his disciples, was attempting to explain to them that they would continue their relationship with one another, even though they would not see him anymore, but that doesn't ease the hurt they are feeling. These disciples have been following Jesus since his public ministry *began*. They are *still* learning, and not able to comprehend what is happening. *They* thought this Messiah was immortal but they are about to find he is...and he is *not*.

Jesus, a man born to this earth, to be God incarnate, made these disciples feel comfortable. Not unlike college students, they had *everything they needed* with Jesus. If they had questions, Jesus answered them, sometimes with another question, but it was meant to make them think. If they were hungry, they had food. If they were thirsty, they drank. If they were scared when the skies got stormy and the seas had wicked waves, Jesus was there to calm them down, to *question* them about their faith, to *challenge* them to do, and to be *better*.

What the disciples do not *realize* at this time, is that *everything* is about to be changed for them. Their emotions will be *everywhere*. They are about to go from dwelling in relative comfort, to heart breaking agony when Jesus is crucified, to *bewilderment* about what to do once he has been placed in the tomb, and they're just sure he is dead and gone and will never see him again. And who will take *care* of them? Who will answer the tough questions and, on top of everything else, and maybe the most important question right now is who will *lead* them?

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places."

Jesus says, stand firm, even when life is about to break you down. Even when you think you can't *take* it anymore. Stand *firm*, and know that God is *with* you, no matter *where* you are in life...no matter *where* you may dwell. Stand *firm* when there's an illness that looks like it has no end. Stand *firm* when your heart is breaking over the loss of a loved one. Stand *firm* when it looks like you will never touch or hug or get within six feet of another person, "Because," Jesus says, "I. Am. Here."

"I'm *with* you when you dwell in *darkness*. I'm *with* you when you *finally* see the *light* and dwell in its *glory and warmth*. I'm with you when you dwell in *sorrow*, but I'm *also* with you when you *rejoice*. I'm with you when you dwell in a place of *destruction*, where people call you *names* and *push* you aside. I'm there! In my Father's house there are **many** dwelling places!"

Jesus says, "Believe me that *I* am in the Father and the Father is in *me*; but if you do *not*, then believe me because of the *works themselves*. Very truly I tell you, the one *who believes* in me will also do the *works* that I do, *and in fact*, will do *greater* works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do *whatever* you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in *my* name you ask me for *anything*, I will do it."

"Do *not* let your hearts be troubled." Do what you *need* to do. Be who you *need* to be. *Remember* that, no matter where you dwell *physically*, or *emotionally*, God in Christ is *there*. Our Father's house is God's *kingdom* come to earth through Jesus, his Son, and we *give* God the *glory*.

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!