

A Dwelling Place for Us

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“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² 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? ³ 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. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves. ¹² 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. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. (John 14:1-14).

1. Jesus Comforts the Disciples

John Chapter 14 is often read at funerals or memorial services. Do you know why? It is because Jesus talks about his plan after his departure in the passage. Jesus tells the disciples and us where he is going after his death. Most people are interested in knowing where we will be after death.

The Bible doesn’t tell us what will exactly happen, but Jesus comforts the disciples by telling them what he is going to do after his crucifixion.

This morning, I want to invite you to reflect on the words of Jesus. I hope Jesus’ words give us comfort when we miss those who have passed and give us a sense of direction that we need to pay more attention.

2. Jesus is About to Depart

In Chapter 13, the chapter prior to our passage, Jesus and the disciples share the Passover meal together in the Upper Room. During the

meal, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. He tells them that one of the disciples will betray him. And he tells Peter that Peter will disown Jesus three times.

In John 13:33, Jesus says, ***“I will be with you a little while longer. Where I am going, you can’t come.”*** I am sure the disciples were very disappointed. They left everything to follow Jesus but now Jesus tells them that very soon he will go somewhere where they can’t follow him.

On this gloomy evening, Jesus exhorts the disciples. In verse 1 and the following, Christ says, ***“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In 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? ³And 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 faces his own death. And yet, he does not focus on his own problems but instead comforts the disciples. Jesus encourages the disciples to trust in the Lord and not to despair. Jesus calls the disciples to believe in spite of a terrible situation.

3. Belief vs Faith

This morning I would like to call your attention to very important terms for us. Jesus says to the disciples, ***“believe in God, believe also in me.”*** The Common English Bible reads this as, ***“Trust in God, trust also in me.”*** The Contemporary English Bible reads, ***“have faith in God and have faith in me.”***

Can you explain what the difference between belief and faith is? In the Greek, there are two words that are used, the verb is *pisteuw* and the noun is *pistis*. In John’s gospel there is no noun but only the verb is used.

On one hand, there is no difference between belief and faith. The two terms are often used interchangeably. On the other hand, the word “faith” often has a deeper meaning. Belief is used to refer to an intellectual acceptance of the factors. However, faith has the idea of trust and commitment. I like what someone explains. He says, “belief can exist in isolation, but faith requires a relationship.”

Between “faith” and “belief” which word would better fit the situation we see in our passage? For me, “faith” would be better than belief. What then does ***“have faith in God and have faith in Jesus”*** mean?

The disciples would have thought the death of Jesus meant that Jesus was defeated, and his mission had failed. The death of Jesus would have meant that God did not care about Jesus. However, Jesus tells his

disciples that Christ's death isn't a sign of defeat. Instead, Jesus' death is God's mission for Christ. In all these circumstances, God is still in control and Jesus is following after God's will.

This is why Jesus says in verse 28, "***If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.***" Jesus assures the disciples that they should be glad that Jesus dies on the cross because Jesus is going to fulfill God's will. That's why they should not be disappointed or troubled.

4. In My Father's House

Jesus also shares with the disciples about another purpose of going to the Father. Verse 2 says, "***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?***" What does "***In my Father's house there are many dwelling places***" mean?

In the Old Testament, God's house was Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. However, the Jerusalem Temple was not the first house of God. In Exodus 25:8, God asks Moses to make a sanctuary for God to dwell among the Israelites. The tabernacle was the first house of the Lord.

What then does Jesus mean when he talks about "my Father's house?" Most people believe this refers to Heaven. But this limits our understanding to God only living in Heaven. The term "dwell" in our passage is a metaphor for the relationship that God and Jesus have. What Jesus tells us is that in Jesus going away from the disciples, Christ will enable all believers to have the same close relationship that Jesus has with God.

This is why we need to pay attention to verse 10: "***Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?***" Jesus later tells Thomas when asking to see the Father, "***Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.***"

Jesus tells Thomas and us that he is the visible image of the invisible God. In experiencing Jesus, the disciples are able to engage with God on earth. Through our relationship with Jesus, we are also able to engage in the same way, truth and life that we can find in God by experiencing through Christ.

5. Conclusion

John 14 is often called the "Farewell Discourse" of Jesus. As Jesus heads to die on the cross, he assures the disciples that God is with him,

and he is in God. He comforts the disciples and lets them know they do not need to be troubled because Jesus will continue to have an intimate relationship with them as part of God's family.

What does this farewell discourse of Jesus mean for us? Many people miss home and search for home. Sometimes I find myself searching for my home on the internet. Of course, I can't find my home on the internet. The saying goes, "home is where the heart is." Where are our hearts? If Jesus is in our hearts then Jesus is where our home is. And if Jesus' heart is in us, we also become the home for Christ.

That's why in verse 23, Jesus says, "***If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.***"

The term "home" is *mone* in the Greek language. This is the same word for "dwelling place" we find in verse 2. Jesus tells us that he will return to invite all the followers of Christ to join him in being at home with God.

6. Application

A church building is often called God's house. But God's household is not a building but a group of people. We are all members of God's household and citizens of God's kingdom as followers of Jesus. God lives in each of us and shows himself in our lives.

When Christine and I reflect on our own lives, we are so grateful to Swift Memorial Church for allowing us to make a home here for the past seven years. While we are grateful for the privilege of living in the parsonage, our many gatherings as a family of God in our men's breakfast, knitting group meetings, new membership classes and fellowships in the parsonage are what have made our time at home here so memorable.

Whenever we are in trouble, we wonder where the risen Lord is. But today's scripture tells us that the invisible Lord still is with us. Whenever you are in trouble, remember what *verses 12-14* says, "***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. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.***"

After we leave church, we aren't sure exactly where our next physical home will be. But we know that Jesus will be our true dwelling place no matter where we go. I pray that each of you finds a true dwelling place in Jesus and here at Swift Memorial Church. Amen.