

# Do Not Be Afraid . . . He Is Risen!

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## Introduction

“Do Not Be Afraid . . .”

- A. Since the Coronavirus and shelter-in-place stuff has been going on, we’ve been in a series looking at the most frequent command in all the Bible.
  - 1. And, as we’ve said, it isn’t what we might first think. It isn’t one of the Ten Commandments, or the Great Commandment, or the Great commission, or things like this. Certainly these are all important—perhaps even more important in some ways—they’re just not the most frequent.
    - a. The most frequent command in all the Bible is: “Do not be afraid.” Which, whatever else this implies, it implies at least this: God cares about your fear and your anxiety and your panic. Or, perhaps, to put it more positively: God cares about your peace.

## The Text

- A. This morning, we’re just going to drop into yet another place in the Scriptures where God issues this command to not be afraid, and this time we’ll see it in connection to Easter and the resurrection of Jesus in particular.
- B. Turn to [John 14:27-28a](#). And as you do, let me provide a quick background:
  - 1. Jesus is now just hours away from His betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion.
  - 2. He’s already enjoyed the Last Supper with His disciples.
  - 3. He’s already taken up the towel and washed their feet.
  - 4. He’s already sent Judas off to do what Satan had put into his heart to do.
  - 5. His “hour” has come. It’s over for Him.
    - a. And yet Jesus, as He is so prone to do, is still here thinking, not of Himself, but of His disciples—and He’s attempting to help them with their peace. It’s amazing!
- C. So let’s read this text, I’ll pray, and then we’ll dive in: “<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.<sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you’” (John 14:27–28a).

## A Global Unrest

- A. This is a wild time isn’t it? Certainly, this is unlike any other Easter Sunday I’ve ever been a part of. This pandemic has really shaken things up quite a bit. And here’s perhaps one of the more profound effects of all this:

1. Usually, various people at various times in various places are moving in and out of trials and hardships so that when one person is more in the thick of it, another is coming out of it. Some are feeling stressed and despondent, while others are feeling hopeful and like life is going well. That's how life usually works—with people of at different places along the spectrum.
  2. But we are in right now one of these rare moments where we're all in the same trial together—and not just locally, or nationally, but globally. All across the world, we're facing this same challenge and disruption and hardship. Some of us certainly still more than others, but, nonetheless, we're all in it.
- B. I can now, then, almost guarantee that every single one of us, perhaps in a way we haven't in quite a while, are dealing with fear and anxiety, and longing for, looking for, peace.

## Filling in the Blank

- A. So I want to begin this message with a question for you to consider. I wonder how you would fill in the blank: "If I just had \_\_\_\_\_, then I would have peace. If I could just get \_\_\_\_\_ figured out, then I would have peace."
1. What would you say? What's missing that you need to get, what's going wrong that you need to fix—and then you'd have peace?
    - a. My sense is that you probably don't have to think very hard to come up with your answer. It's probably right there buzzing around at the forefront of your mind. You're probably already distracted with thoughts about it, even as I'm talking now. Your mind is probably already spinning off towards what's going wrong, what's upsetting you, what needs to get right before you can have peace. I'm just asking you to name it. What is it?
- B. Well, whatever your answer may be, my guess is it likely fits within one of five broader categories which I would put forward as follows: (1) The Relational; (2) The Financial; (3) The Vocational; (4) The Moral; or (5) The Physical.
1. We're often worried about our relationships; worried about our money; stressed about our jobs; struggling with guilty consciences; and anxious about our health, getting sick, facing death.
- C. And here's what's so incredible: Jesus, in His death and resurrection, actually addresses all of these and more.
1. The verses I just read—[John 14:27-28a](#)—present us with really the first and most basic statement on the matter.
    - a. We see there quite clearly that (1) Jesus has come to bring us peace; that (2) His peace is not like that which the world gives; and that (3) this peace is tied in a fundamental way to His death and resurrection (that's what is meant by "[I am going](#)

away [His death], and I will come to you [which most scholars take to be a reference to His resurrection and perhaps also the coming of the Holy Spirit]”).

2. But this basic statement about the peace Jesus has come to give is worked out in the larger context of [John 14](#) as a whole. And, it’s there in the larger context of this chapter, that we see how this peace, tethered as it is to the death and resurrection of Jesus, actually pushes into and permeates those five broad categories I mentioned earlier in profound ways.
- D. So, this morning, all I want to do is quickly move through each of those five categories one at a time, and show you how, from the larger context of [John 14](#), Jesus actually meets us in them and brings peace to us there in a way that the world never could.

## (1) The Relational

### The Heart’s Trouble

- A. Some of you, when I asked you to fill in the blank, likely thought of a relationship of some sort.
1. Maybe what you long for is acceptance and approval from this or that person—maybe a parent, a boss, a peer. “And then,” you say, “I’d finally have peace.”
  2. Or maybe you’re in a relationship with a spouse or significant other and it’s just a nightmare. And you’re saying: “Until this gets right, I will never know peace. I cry myself to sleep out on the couch every night!”
  3. Others of us, perhaps, just want a relationship. You’re alone. And you have been for such a long time. And you’re just wondering: “Is there something wrong with me? Why doesn’t anyone want to be with me?”
- B. And this pandemic we’re facing makes these things all the more aggravated doesn’t it?
1. If you had strife with your spouse before, well, now that you’re sheltering-in-place together, with nowhere to go, no one else to see—perhaps it’s made things better and forced you to work through some stuff—but it’s quite likely it’s made matters even worse.
  2. And, of course, if you were single and lonely before, well what now, that you can’t even leave your house to go hang with your friends?
- C. So I imagine some of you are saying: “If I could just get my relationships figured out, then I could be at peace.”

### The Savior’s Peace

- A. Now what does Easter, what does Jesus’ death and resurrection have to do with that? In a word: Everything! So Jesus says in [John 14:18ff](#): “<sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. . . . <sup>20</sup> In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. . . . <sup>23</sup> 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” (vv. 18-20, 23).
1. Do you hear it? The intimate, nurturing, satisfying relationship that Jesus wants with you?

- B. The idea here is that Jesus, after His death and resurrection, will, not only come to His disciples momentarily in bodily form, but He will also come to His disciples in spiritual form, in the person of the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. And this Spirit, as Paul refers to Him in [Rom 8:15](#), is the “[Spirit of adoption.](#)” It is in this way that we are not left as orphans, but we are brought into the family of God as His children, and they come and make their home within us.
- C. Because of what Jesus does at the cross, we can have a reconciled relationship with God. And when this relationship is made right it makes all the difference in our relationships with one another.
  - 1. To be clear, it doesn’t fix everything, but it gives us a strength to endure, because though my spouse may be at odds with me, God is no longer! Therefore, I don’t have to play the eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth game, I can absorb relational conflict, soften my heart and, even, bless.
  - 2. And I may not get married, I may be single for the rest of my life, but, let’s be clear, I’m not alone, and I’m certainly not unloved.
- D. This is the sort of thing that we see actually gives Jesus Himself strength, as He’s en route to the cross: [John 16:32](#): “Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”
  - 1. Paul the Apostle describes a similar experience in [2 Tim 4:16-17](#): “<sup>16</sup> At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! <sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.”
- E. If you have a reconciled relationship with God now as your Father, then, however hard your other relationships may be, you can still have deep-seated, heart-stilling peace. You can have this stability. The One who is over all is watching over you as a Dad, for your good.

## (2) The Financial

### The Heart’s Trouble

- A. Some of you, no doubt, would think of money as critical to your security and peace. And how much more so now that the economy seems to be so rapidly sliding down into the gutter—salaries are being cut; investments are tanking; jobs are being furloughed or terminated. It’s been devastating.
  - 1. And so naturally, many of us are spinning around going: “Until I get this money thing figured out, there’s no way I can have peace.”
- B. We take a confidence in our wealth. It makes us feel stable. And, of course, it’s not just money in the bank, right? It’s about having your material needs met, having your barns full.
  - 1. Like that man in the parable Jesus tells in [Luke 12](#) who builds big old barns to store his crops and then, when he’s filled them up to the brim, he sits back and says: “[Soul, you have ample](#)

goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry” (v. 19). In other words, “Okay, now I can have peace.”

- C. And there’s a lot of us that are feeling that way. Especially now. We’re feeling that urge to stockpile and things, and store up, as a way of securing our future and our peace.
  - 1. I felt this in overdrive the other day when I finally decided to brave the elements and head to Costco. Even as I was pulling into the parking I could feel it, that fight or flight kind of thing. As people were coming out and I saw there was toilet paper in their cart and other coveted items. My blood pressure started to rise, and I was ready to run in and do what I had to do to get what my family needed. And then you get in there and you see the signs, you can only take one of certain things. And there was this lady who was trying to sneak off with like 20 Costco-sized cartons of eggs, and she got caught, and the guy was rebuking her because now she had to touch all these items that she had to put back for others to take home. But it just felt like Hunger Games in there. And you’re just ready to do what you need to do to survive.
    - a. Am I the only one? Like, “If I could just get more and more for myself, I’d be safe, I’d be secure.” And I’d be willing to push others under the bus to try to get it.

## The Savior’s Peace

- A. But, again, Easter and Jesus’ death and resurrection come in to help at this point. Look at what He says to His disciples in [John 14:1-3](#): “<sup>1</sup> Let not your hearts be troubled. . . . <sup>2</sup> 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? <sup>3</sup> 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.”
- B. He’s talking about the new heavens and new earth here. He’s talking about the ultimate destination of the children of God. He’s talking about what He has secured for us by way of His death and resurrection: namely, an eternal inheritance and place around the table in the kingdom of God.
  - 1. Whatever else is implied in these words, certainly you could say part of the idea has to be that we are secure and stable even materially, financially.
    - a. Some of us are worried right now that because of job loss, because of the economy, we’re going to lose our homes. He says, don’t worry about that. “[“In my Father’s house are many rooms.”](#) And one of them has your name on it.”
- C. You see, we try so hard to establish our security here and now through material means, but it never works, right? It always lets us down in the end. We can feel it. There’s always something precarious about it. The peace is paper thin.
  - 1. So the man with the bigger barns, you remember the parable, God comes for his soul that very night, and all this stuff he laid up for himself can’t come with him. The foundation of his peace just gave way beneath his feet.

- D. But those who know Christ have something so much more stable. Our peace doesn't have to rise and fall with the markets. It's risen with Christ never to fall again!
  - 1. So we can live like the author of Hebrews tells us Abraham did. He had no problem spending out his days living in a mere tent in a land that wasn't his. Why? Because he was "looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb 11:10). He knew he had a place in the world to come.
- E. Heb 12:28 says that, in Jesus, we have received "a kingdom that cannot be shaken." And what that means is that, even when all around is shaking and threatening to come undone, we can still have peace. We're going to be taken care of in the end.

### (3) The Vocational

#### The Heart's Trouble

- A. By "The Vocational" I simply mean that I think sometimes we tie our peace (and even our sense of identity for that matter) to our work. We think, if I find the right job, the right vocation, I'll have found my purpose and will have a sense of wellbeing and fulfillment.
  - 1. So I imagine that some of us would fill in that blank by saying: "Get me a job. Get me work that lasts, that feels 'essential.'"
- B. I use that word advisedly because, again, I think the Coronavirus has really aggravated the issue for us. Now all of a sudden, because your work isn't deemed "essential," you can't be doing it.
  - 1. That kind of stings, right? "I thought I was doing good work. I guess it wasn't as important as I thought it was." And you can feel in this like your life isn't worth all that much.
    - a. And it gets even worse when your boss calls and says: "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to let you go."
- C. Well, who are you now? You're spinning.
  - 1. Sometimes in the midst of this you get suicidal. In fact, that's one of the things they're watching because studies have connected, as we would expect—unemployment to increased risk of suicide. Because you just come out saying: "What's the point of my life? My vocation is where I spend the majority of my days, I've poured everything into this, and now it's gone. When I lost that job, I didn't just lose my livelihood I lost my life, my reason for being."
    - a. They're projecting some 800,000 jobs will be lost in the bay area alone by next month. That's 800,000 people left wondering, perhaps: "What's the point of my life? Why am I even here?"

## The Savior's Peace

- A. And here's the thing, yet again. Easter has something to say about this. The death and resurrection of Christ is immensely relevant. So Jesus says in [John 14:12](#): "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."
- B. I don't suppose you see the connection just yet. But let me show you what I mean.
1. If I could just cut straight to it: Jesus is speaking here again about how He's going to head to the cross, rise from the dead, ascend to the Father, and pour out His Spirit—and when He does He's going to catch us up into a mission so much bigger than ourselves.
- C. This is the church at Pentecost.
1. Jesus says go back to Jerusalem and wait. The Spirit is coming, and when He comes, you're going to take the good news of the gospel, you're going to advance the kingdom of God, from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and even to the end of the earth.
    - a. Jesus spent His whole life and ministry walking back and forth on a relatively small plot of land in the Middle East. Within only a few years after His departure, the church is already exploding and expanding beyond that!
- D. Now, what I'm trying to say here is this. Christians are given a vocation, a calling, a job more "essential" than perhaps we even realize. In Christ, God includes us in His mission to redeem and renew the cosmos! It's insane!
1. And listen to me: This is a mission, a purpose, a reason for being, that COVID-19 cannot take from you. If anything hardships like this only enhance it and make it more important. As I've heard it said now again and again: The church was made for moments like these!
- E. So, consider one example I've seen circling around these last days. Charles Spurgeon back in 1866, when addressing pastors and Christians amid an outbreak of cholera, said this: "And now . . . is the minister's time; and now is the time for all of you who love souls. You may see men more alarmed than they are already; and if they should be, mind that you avail yourselves of the opportunity of doing them good. You have the Balm of Gilead; when their wounds smart, pour it in. You know of Him who died to save; tell them of Him. Lift high the cross before their eyes. Tell them that God became man that man might be lifted to God. Tell them of Calvary, and its groans, and cries, and sweat of blood. Tell them of Jesus hanging on the cross to save sinners. . . . Tell them that he is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. Tell them that he is able to save even at the eleventh hour, and to say to the dying thief, 'Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'"
- F. Do you see? Whether you lose your job or not, in Christ you still have a job of far greater significance. You're sense of purpose and reason for being is not lost. Your life still greatly matters. And, therefore, your peace in this vocational sense, cannot be disturbed.

## (4) The Moral

### The Heart's Trouble

- A. Now here I am referencing the fact that many of us feel a sense of unrest because we're weighed down with things like guilt and shame. Perhaps you are still replaying failures from the past and you just feel stuck in the darkness of it all.
1. You wish you could pay it back somehow, atone for it somehow, get better somehow. And you kind of feel like until that happens, you won't have peace.

### The Savior's Peace

- A. But here, of course, Easter has choice words for us as well. The death and resurrection of Jesus changes everything. So He says in [John 14:1](#): "Let not your hearts be troubled."
- B. And you say: "Really Nick? That's it? I don't get it. What does that have to do with a guilty conscience?"
1. Ah, well the clue is in the context. And I love this. Look up at the verse immediately preceding this. What do you see? Jesus is talking to Peter about his upcoming denial.
    - a. [John 13: 38](#): "Jesus answered [Peter], "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." Then comes [John 14:1](#): "Let not your hearts be troubled."
- C. And I'm thinking, if I'm Peter: "You just told me I'm going to deny you three times. I'm going to abandon you in the moments when you need me most . . . to save my own skin. If what You say is true, I am deeply troubled, I am terribly distressed. What kind of a sick and twisted sinner am I?" Imagine the guilt and the shame.
1. But, again, in come the Savior's words: "Let not your heart be troubled [Peter]."
- D. You see, Jesus understands what Peter doesn't yet. Namely, that He is going to take Peter's sins upon Himself and suffer under the wrath of God in his place. All the guilt, all the shame, placed upon Him.
1. So that when He rises three days later, there will be nothing left for Peter to be troubled about. Paid in full. He takes our myriad sins. We get His perfect righteousness.
- E. This is the only way I know to effectively deal with the unrest of a guilty conscience. Here in the light of the cross, we are able to both see our sin for what it is (horrible) and yet still not be condemned or stuck in it (because Jesus took it, and overcame it, and is leading us out of it).
1. Therefore, even when we watch sometimes junk coming out of our hearts, there is peace for us in the blood of Jesus.



## (5) The Physical

- A. Now, obviously, I have not left myself much time for this. But suffice it to say, certainly many of us, especially in the days of this pandemic, are worried about our health, getting sick, facing death. And we struggle to think we could ever have peace again until all of this is past us.
- B. But here, perhaps, is where Easter gets most eloquent and most relevant of all.
  - 1. Because what are we celebrating this day but the fact that our Savior has not only died for our sins but risen up from the grave. He has not only conquered Satan and sin . . . He has triumphed over death itself!
- C. And here's the good news of the gospel: His victory is and will be ours. So He says to His disciples in [John 14:19](#): "Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."
  - 1. Let's be clear. These disciples are going to face horrible deaths for following Jesus. Nevertheless it is still true: "[Because I live, you also will live.](#)" "Death will not have the last word over you."
    - a. And it will be true for all of us who are in Christ as well.
- D. So let me ask you to consider how you'd fill in that blank again: "If I just had \_\_\_\_\_, then I would have peace."
  - 1. Can I propose another answer—one that, I hope by now you can see encompasses all the others: Christ. "If I just had Christ, then I would have peace."
    - a. So what are you waiting for? Turn to Him in faith and lay hold of Him and His peace even now.