

## BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### "Bridge Over Troubled Water"

May 7, 2023 Rev. Becky Stephens

Text: John 14:1-14 NLT God's Word: Romans 8:31-39 NLT

#### *John 14:1-14 NLT*

*14 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going." <sup>5</sup> "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" <sup>6</sup> Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!" <sup>8</sup> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." <sup>9</sup> Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? <sup>10</sup> Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. <sup>11</sup> Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do. <sup>12</sup> "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. <sup>13</sup> You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. <sup>14</sup> Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!"*

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Anthony Castellitto, a United Methodist Christian from New Jersey wrote the following for an Upper Room Devotional:

"Our son was diagnosed with autism when he was two years old. My wife noticed subtle changes in his behavior; within months, his language and social interactions became severely diminished. The outgoing boy we knew and loved was gone, fixed on his own world. Nothing could have prepared us for what we were facing. We turned to God, praying for our son's recovery. Knowing that a complete recovery would be uncommon, we also prayed for our understanding and acceptance. We are involved in a healing process, emotionally for our family and developmentally for our child. Now even the smallest improvement feels like the biggest blessing. I firmly believe that through this sudden adversity, we've been brought closer to God and to one another."

What is troubling you this morning? We all have big stuff on our minds, no doubt. Right here this morning, some of us are dealing with the loss or death of a loved one. Others of us are watching--hopelessly, as someone we love is beginning to pass away. Others of us may fear our own death. Some of us are sick. Some of us are lonely. Some of us can barely face the day.

And then, look out at our world. We are surrounded by wars, nightly shootings, natural disasters, and the ever-looming threat of trouble. What can possibly free our hearts from trouble, in the face of so much death, so much evil?

*"Don't be troubled,"* Jesus says. When has advice like that ever been helpful?  
"Don't be afraid; don't be nervous; don't be anxious; don't be shattered." It's almost laughable, isn't it?

This conversation between Jesus and His disciples comes after the Last Supper, on the night of Jesus' arrest--the day before His horrible Crucifixion. Judas had already left to betray Jesus. And Jesus is telling His disciples that His time has come to leave this world. And then Jesus says, *"Don't be troubled."* Well, who wouldn't be troubled???

Right before this, Peter said, *"I'll give up my life for you."* But Jesus' reply was, *"I assure you that you will deny me three times before the rooster crows."* And then Jesus says, *"Don't be troubled."*

The word Jesus uses here for "troubled" is used to describe "agitation and disturbance in the face of the power of death and evil." When Jesus is crucified, it will look as if the devil has gotten his way. It will look as if Jesus has been defeated. It will look as if evil has triumphed over good. It will seem as if Jesus is gone forever.

But Jesus says, *"Don't be troubled."* Don't let the power of death and evil disturb you. But how could they not be disturbed? How couldn't we?

The world has a multitude of answers to this question. All of which leaves us just as troubled as before. Jesus has one answer: *"Trust in God. Trust also in me."*

Author Greg Gilbert shares this story: "I started trying to teach my son to swim early on. It was a chore. A year or so old at the time, the little guy didn't like getting water in his face in the bathtub, much less this massive ocean of a pool he was staring at now.

At first, 'teaching him to swim' meant getting him to splash around a bit on the top step, and maybe putting his lips in the water enough to blow bubbles if he was feeling really brave. Eventually I convinced him to walk around with me in the shallow end, with a death-grip around my neck of course. Once we mastered that, it was time for the Big Show—Jumping Off the Side.

Fulfilling my God-given duty as a daddy, I lifted him out of the pool, stood him on the side, and said, 'Come on, jump!' 'Come on, kiddo.' 'I'm right here. I'll catch you. I promise!'"

Gilbert continues, "He looked at me, did one more little wind-up, bouncing at the knees, and then fell into the pool with what was more a flop than a jump. And I caught him. After that we

were off to the races. 'Doot 'gain, Daddy! Doot 'gain!' And so commenced half an hour of jump, catch, lift, reset, jump, catch, lift, reset."

How many of you can relate to the trust that little boy had in his father?

Perhaps for you it was your mother, grandfather, or a friend. No matter, when that person was waiting to "catch you," you had no fear, you were no longer "*troubled*" by the thought of jumping into the "proverbial pool of troubling water."

But sadly, whether the person you trust or trusted was a father, mother, spouse, whoever...those people, are...people--human, like you and me. They will not always be here.

What do we do when those in whom we once went to for support are no longer able to support us? Where do we turn when things look bleak, and the power of impending death and evil appear to have the upper hand?

Jesus says, "*Don't be troubled.*" "Don't be nervous, anxious, shattered." This kind of talk is usually meaningless...unless, unless...it comes from someone we really trust...unless it comes from someone we know we can count on, someone we know loves us and will be present with us during the storms of life.

I was sharing some of my ideas about this sermon with someone this past week and she said, "I have always found these words from Jesus difficult to grasp because it is such a big concept." "*Don't be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me,*" says Jesus, "*Don't be troubled.*"

Apparently, my friend is not alone. For, when Jesus did go away...when Jesus was arrested...His disciples were very, very troubled!!! They "scattered." Peter denied even knowing Him. They hid behind locked doors in "fear." They were "*troubled*" BIG TIME!!!

Even after Jesus was Resurrected, they continued to be "troubled." For 40 days Jesus appeared to them again and again and again. And still, it took time. They had to learn to trust in Jesus, they had to learn that no matter what they were going through, no matter what happened to them in life--Jesus was there for them--Jesus was their strength, like a bridge over troubled water.

And like a bridge over troubled water Jesus was their way to God--and is our way to God--to truth--to Life...and this Life which comes by faith in Jesus is a dwelling place in the bosom of God--not just for eternity, but right here and right now!!!

One theologian has written: "To be on the way is to know truth and have life." Do you know that the early Christians referred to themselves as "the followers of the Way"?

In verse 27 of John Chapter 14 Jesus says, "*Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid.*"

It took time for the disciples to learn that they could, indeed, "trust in Jesus." And it takes time for us as well.

For the Apostle Paul, he had to endure tons and tons of hardships, to be able to get to the point where he was able to confidently write: *"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?"*--do you know that Paul experienced all these things, but through his experience of faith he learned that he didn't experience them alone?

And so, he learned to trust in Jesus, and he was able to write: *"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Wow!!! That is powerful. That's the most powerful stuff in the world!!!

A dear, dear friend of mine, retired from the ministry in the mid-90's. And about as soon as he retired, he learned that he had Alzheimer's Disease.

I called up his family and checked on him periodically. His daughter shared that Reid sounded joyful. She laughed and said that her Dad had shared with her, "I've learned that what I've been preaching all these years--I actually believe!!! Whatever happens, happens. And I'm fine with it because I'm in the Lord."

Are you convinced that nothing could separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?

"When you're feeling weary, feeling small, when tears are in your eyes..."  
--are you convinced?

"When times get rough, and friends just can't be found..."  
--Are you convinced?

"When you're down and out, when you're on the street, when everything falls so hard...when darkness comes, and pain is all around..."  
--Are you convinced?

What are you going through this morning? What is "troubling you?" Whatever it is, big or 'seemingly' small, Jesus says to you, Jesus says to me this morning: *"Trust in God. Trust also in me."*