

**+ John 14:25-27 + There's No Need for a Troubled Heart +
+ Day of Pentecost & Spring Festival of Friendship + 31 May 2009 +**

We live in “interesting” times, don’t we? If you understand that saying correctly, “interesting times” aren’t always a good thing. “Interesting times” are times filled with news and times filled with news are often filled with bad news or worrisome news or troubling news. In fact, considering the times in which we live, we might describe them as “troubling” times, wouldn’t we?

Nuclear threats pop up in East Asia while bombs go off in the Middle East while violence strikes on Syracuse streets. The economy continues at a snail’s pace while people lose their jobs and bills get harder to pay as they pile up. Marriages hit rough patches while others spin out of control. Strife grows in families between parents and teens, while real family time disappears beneath a flood of activity or gets wasted in front of a flat-screen HDTV or a computer screen or on a cell phone. Feelings of guilt and doubt and fear continue to grow every time there’s more troubling news.

In these “interesting times”, we quickly realize we can’t do this alone, so to whom do we go? We go to our friends with the hope they can provide some help, some encouragement, some direction, maybe even some calm to our troubled lives. Good friends usually come through in some way, whether it’s providing a shoulder to cry on or a needed word of advice or simply just being there. Unfortunately, that help, that encouragement, that calm only lasts so long. Pretty soon we find ourselves with troubled hearts once again, but today Jesus reminds us we have a Friend, whose help and peace are always there for us. He’s always there for us, so really **THERE’S NO NEED FOR A TROUBLED HEART**. Hear again Jesus’ words from **John 14**.

Jesus’ disciples needed help. They needed it badly. It was a Thursday evening. They had just finished celebrating the Jewish festival of Passover, but during the evening Jesus had shared some troubling news. One of their own would betray him that very night to his enemies and Jesus would be condemned to die. Within 24 hours, Jesus would lose his life, while all his disciples would abandon him to save their own skins. Even his disciple Peter would publicly deny Jesus, his best friend, that very night. All this bad news naturally troubled the disciples’ hearts, but at the same time, Jesus had also provided powerful promises that he would rise from the dead just three days later to seal his once-and-for-all payment for the world’s sins.

In spite of the promises, which would surely take place, the hearts of the disciples remained troubled and filled with fear. It’s not surprising. The prospect of losing their Teacher after three years of following him shook them to the core. What would they do? How could something so awful happen to him? Unfortunately, what Jesus had to say about his rising from the dead and what that would mean for them didn’t even register.

So Jesus did what we so often see him do elsewhere in the Gospels. He calmed their troubled hearts. He removed their fear. He reminded them of what they had heard and seen over the past three years. **“All this I have spoken while still with you.”** Then Jesus provided the help the disciples needed to understand and believe the profound truths he was teaching them that night, truths they needed to hear before his suffering began.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” Help was on the way. Hours later Jesus was betrayed and his suffering began. By Friday evening, he was dead after hanging for hours on a wooden cross. He was hurriedly buried, but three days later on Easter Sunday, his tomb stood empty. That Easter evening, Jesus himself reminded his disciples of what he had taught them. **“This is what I told you while I was still with you...”**, but more help was still on the way. After forty days of appearing to his disciples and teaching them, Jesus took his disciples out to a hill outside of Jerusalem, raised his hands in blessing, and was physically taken up into heaven. Help was on the way. Ten days later on the Jewish festival day of Pentecost, Jesus made good on his promise.

His heavenly Father sent the Holy Spirit to provide the help Jesus’ disciples so desperately needed. The Holy Spirit, the Helper, would **“teach [them] all things”**. The Holy Spirit would help them to understand how Jesus fulfilled all the promises of the Old Testament of a Savior from sin. He would help them to fully grasp what it was that Jesus accomplished through his perfect life, his innocent suffering and death and his glorious resurrection—forgiveness for their sins and the reality of eternal life with him in heaven.

The Holy Spirit would **“remind [them] of everything [Jesus had] said to [them]”**, all the promises, all the teaching that Jesus had ever shared with them. The Holy Spirit would then fill their hearts with a desire to share that good news of Christ Jesus and enable them to carry out that task right away. Help came to those disciples and because of that God-given help, we’re here today. You see, the Holy Spirit worked through the good news of Christ Jesus they proclaimed to create faith in Jesus in the hearts of people all over the world even up to us here today and beyond.

You and I badly need that help from our Best Friend too. I'm sure you haven't forgotten that we live in "interesting times" that so easily trouble our hearts. When trouble or difficulty or hardship comes into your life, on your own, you're left to search for your own help and that help won't last. Self-help books and pithy advice can only go so far, before you're left alone and helpless. Without Jesus' help, you slide further into loneliness and despair.

Yet in his gracious and merciful love, Jesus pulls you out of that despair. He comes to you through his Word, through the good news of sins forgiven and eternal life won for you on a cross and in an empty tomb. Oh, and he also has help for you, a "Helper" actually, just as he did for the disciples.

What kind of "Helper" is this? Well, we look closer at the word translated as "Helper" to find out. Literally that word in the original means "the One who is always going to be by your side". It has the idea of one who is an advocate or mediator, a counselor, an encourager, a comforter. In fact, one language in Central Africa translates that word as "the one who falls down beside you", that if he found you hurt on the side of a road, he wouldn't hesitate to kneel down in the mud and dirt to help and care for you.

The Holy Spirit is truly a special Helper from Jesus, but that Helper doesn't come through a dream or a thunderstorm or some form of indigestion. Jesus sends that Helper to you through his holy Word, the same Good News he proclaimed so long ago. Through that Word, the Holy Spirit helps you to remember what Jesus taught there and what he did there. There in the Word, the Holy Spirit helps you to remember how countless are the promises of God and how just as countless are his fulfillments. Jesus fulfilled every one and continues to fulfill them even today—forgiveness for the guilt of all your sin, confidence in the reality of eternal life in heaven, purpose for your life as a beloved child of God, certainty that the almighty and gracious God is in control of all things no matter how much hell breaks loose.

There was also a special promise that the Holy Spirit was to share with you and me and all believers in Christ—the promise of Christ's lasting, ever-present, ever-near peace for your troubled heart. Jesus promises, ***"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."***

Those clear words seem so simple, but think about when Jesus was speaking them to his disciples. The next day would be the most violent in Jesus' earthly life and the most heart-wrenching for his disciples. Jesus would suffer excruciating pain being nailed to a cross besides all the ridicule and flogging and injustice and rejection both from the leaders, who should've known better, and from his heavenly Father. The disciples would go into fearful hiding behind locked doors, but still Jesus gave them his peace.

You see, Jesus' peace is unlike any other peace in the world. It doesn't depend on treaties or agreements or fragile relations between warring countries or tense tempers. His peace isn't the kind that's given if you give something back in return. No, Jesus gives his peace away freely, willingly, almost recklessly. With that peace, Jesus calmed their troubled hearts.

Why does Christ's gift of peace matter for you and me today? We still live in troubling times. We still have to face the hardships and the troubles and the difficulties and the worries of this life, while the peace the world promises only leaves you and me with empty, restless, fearful souls.

Then the sweet voice of your Best Friend sounds on your ear again, the Friend who sealed his friendship with his innocent blood and his precious suffering and death, the Friend who gave up his life for you and then took it up again. That sweet, calming voice of your Best Friend tells you, ***"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I don't give as the world gives.*** There's no need for you to have a troubled heart. Look at the peace I your Friend, your Brother, your Comforter give to you, my friend. Look back into my manger bed and see how peace came to earth that first Christmas night to live for you. Look at my cross and see how I bring peace for your guilt-ridden soul. Look at my empty tomb and see how I bring peace to your fears about death, your worries about your dying loved one or your loneliness since your loved one passed away. Look at how I now rule all things for your good, so you can have peace even in troubled times. There's no need for a troubled heart. My Holy Spirit, your Helper, shares that peace through my Word. Don't be afraid. My peace is real and it's yours."

It's always a blessing to have a friend to lean on at different times of life, especially when life gets "interesting" in a not-so-pleasant way, but you don't have just any friend. You have Christ, the Best Friend of all. With him as your Best Friend, even in the worst of times, there's no need for a troubled heart, because you have help in him! You have peace in him! ***"Don't let your heart be troubled and don't be afraid."*** In Jesus, there's no need! Amen.