

A short reflection on John 14: 1-14 (in context)

Reading the gospel passage this morning, I can't even get past the first verse without wondering how Jesus' friends could be anything but troubled, distressed, bewildered! He's just told them he will be leaving



them soon. They don't know exactly what that means, but Jesus does make it clear that they can't come with him where he's going. How hard for them to hear!

After following him and being with him through all that's transpired in the past three years, seeing him heal the sick,

give sight to the blind, listening to him preach and teach; his presence being not only precious and dear to them, but the very ground of hopefulness in the future. And now he says he's not going to be with them much longer. How could they be anything but distressed. How can Jesus say, " Don't let your hearts be troubled."

The reason he gives them as to why their hearts can settle, is both simple and complex. *You are trusting in God. Trust also in me.* Those words are huge! His friends are to keep trusting him, just as they continue to trust God. Amidst all their bewilderment and questions, Jesus asks them – tells them – to keep trusting him. And so begins a section of three more chapters of Jesus' final teaching and his prayers for his friends, before he heads out into the night to be arrested, and crucified. And then – beyond all expectations – Jesus rises from the dead. The new creation begins, and Jesus' friends are *still* trying to come to terms with the implications, what this means for them and for all of us.

In the meantime, how can our hearts not be troubled?

The continuing portion of the reading in John 14 doesn't answer all their questions (or ours!) in a way that means they or we can simply say, 'oh I see.... I won't worry about a thing. Thanks for explaining.' Rather Jesus opens

up the depths of the mystery of his person and his work in the unfolding of the promise and purpose of God. He gives responses, but his friends then, and we now are left to ponder the depths of meaning, the continuing significance of all Jesus says and does.

Trusting Jesus doesn't mean we have all our questions answered. It means something *more like we are clinging to the sleeve of the one who has the answers, even while we don't understand*; we are assured he's the one to trust, but we don't always 'get' what he's saying. We don't understand *in order to* trust in Jesus. We trust Jesus in order to understand. The direction of our lives is 'faith seeking understanding'.

The promise Jesus gives in John 14 is that he is going away to prepare a place for his friends to be with him where he is. And that he would return and take them to be with him. He assures them they know the way to the place where he's going.

Both Thomas and Phillip, who know Jesus so well and are right there with him, are bursting with questions, starting with, 'We don't know where you're going so how can we know the way?'

What about us?

Now, from our perspective, with the whole account of Jesus birth, death, resurrection and ascension, and the gift of his promised Spirit, we may be at some advantage to those who had not yet seen the events that unfolded over the next days and weeks. Yet... we share the same bewilderment when it comes to trusting Jesus. For his gift of himself is far beyond our ability to comprehend. Always. Yet....



Amidst all the circumstances of life, right now, today, with our particular setting amidst a dangerous pandemic, with our own struggle with health, and family, and relationships, my hope is that we each might hear again

Jesus words as an invitation to trust him. To trust him who has shown us God himself, his love and care, going to the depths, even to death, for us.

May we, you and I and all of us, look to Jesus, again, still, always, and let him settle our troubled hearts, hold our harried selves, and provide for us in ways beyond our imaginings. And may we be blessed as we continue to explore, question, discover and wonder at the riches of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.