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Message for March 7, 2021
"In His Steps: Always Looking Out for Others"

Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: John 14:1-7

A Word of Hope

In the Upper Room, Jesus dealt with some pretty serious stuff. He knew he was not long for this earth. The cross was casting a shadow over everything he said and did. As he met with his disciples during the Passover Meal, he talked about his body being broken and his blood spilt.

Jesus also washed his disciples' feet to awaken them to his every desire to tend to their needs. Certainly, he would do that on the cross. He sent Judas to do what was in his heart to do. He even challenged Peter who soon he would deny him three separate times.

In the mix of all that Jesus shifted gears and offered a word of hope. He encouraged his disciples to take the long view. He pointed their sights toward heaven.

Eugene Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases what Christ had to say about such things this way, "Don't let this throw you. You trust in God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you?" Let's hear more about what Christ says as we read John 14:1-7. Hear this from God's word.

John 14:1-7

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Everyone Needs Their Place

Our kids in Nashville are getting ready to move. They are relocating near to where they live. The past few weeks they have been looking for a new home in what is a robust real estate market. It has been a real challenge for them. As with any house hunting, there are some thing you hope for, some things that would be helpful, and then some things that are non-negotiables. As with any house hunting there is always some compromise when it comes to the first two, but none when it comes to the non-negotiables.

One of the non-negotiables for Brian and his family is the number of bedrooms. That's the way it is with a growing family. Everybody needs their room, I guess.

I have noticed the same sort of dynamic at play on the *HGTV Network*. The show, *House Hunters*, features people who are also moving. Armed with a budget and wish list of what they want in a house, those people visit three homes and from them decide which one to purchase. There is usually a lot of compromise. Quite often, the budget and the wish list don't square. Usually there is some cutting back one way or the other.

It is not unusual though for the buyers to remain dead set on the number of rooms. They may budge on the decor, the locale, the type of yard, or even the size of the house, but they very rarely budge on the number of rooms. Everybody needs their room, I guess.

"Plenty of Good Room"

The old spiritual heartens us to no end in talking about heaven, *"There's plenty of good room, plenty of good room, plenty of good room in the Father's Kingdom."*

I have always liked the song, *Big House*, made popular by the Christian rock group, *Audio Adrenaline*. *"Come and go with me to my Father's house. Come and go with me to my Father's house. It's a big, big house with lots and lots of room. A big, big table with lots and lots of food. A big, big yard where we can play football. A big, big house. It's my Father's house."* You get the idea. Everybody needs their room, I guess.

Words of Comfort

This week Jesus offers one of the more comforting words in all of scripture. *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am."*

These words hearten me every time I read them. I have read them countless times at funerals and those who hear them are encouraged. It is good to know there is a place prepared for us. For the person who puts his/her faith in Christ there is no reason to fear death. In fact, life takes on a whole new perspective when we put our gaze heavenward.

A Reassuring Word

In a world filled with all sorts of trouble, and let's face it there is enough trouble to go around these days, it's good to hear a reassuring word. Thank God, Christ brings that word. He is always looking out for others.

What sort of things are you facing? What heavy loads are you bearing? Jesus longs to meet you in the midst of them.

People are writing these days about people hitting the *"wall"* when it comes to the Pandemic. With all the hope about emerging, the end of the Pandemic still seems to be a long way off. We are coming up on the one-year anniversary of a lot of events that mark a season of tremendous social and racial upheaval in our country. Everyone will be challenged in the days ahead if we are not already now.

Regardless of what you are facing, the call is to put your trust in Christ. *“Believe in God, believe also in me,”* says Jesus.

Sarah Young in *Jesus Calling* writes, *“Well-developed trust will bring you many blessings, not the least of which is My Peace.”* Placing our trust in Christ always brings a glimmer of hope, even in our darkest hour. In Christ, we find ourselves well-sustained and deeply consoled.

A Place for You

The message Jesus wants to get across is this: We have every reason to be hopeful for this life and the next. *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

Jesus is saying that when it comes to eternity there is a place for you. As we said just a few minutes ago, *“everybody needs their place.”* Our faith is squarely built on the truth that for those who so believe there is a place set aside in eternity.

In talking about *“place,”* I am not talking about some luxury condo in the heavens, but a place where we are able to have unencumbered relationship with God, a place to offer praise and thanksgiving his way for all eternity.

The Greek word used here for rooms is *moanie*, which is best translated *“dwelling places.”* As a verb the root of that same word is translated *“remain”* or *“abide.”* It is the very word Jesus uses in John 15 when he talks about us *“abiding”* in him. We will talk about *“abiding”* in him next week.

Essentially what Jesus is saying is this, *“If you trust me, if you abide in me, if you put your faith in me, you will dwell in the presence of the Lord forever.”* We have nothing to fear. Jesus stands with us, now and forever.

Jesus Leads the Way

Upon Jesus offering this hopeful word, Thomas chimed in with a couple of questions. You would figure that of all the disciples Thomas would be the one to do that. Thomas was just naturally inquisitive. He was also quite the empiricist. Like you and me sometimes, he just needed to see some evidence.

“You know the way where I am going,” said Jesus.”

To which, Thomas replied, *“Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?”*

Thomas would have been well-satisfied with a road map. These days when it comes to knowing where we are going there are all sorts of things at our disposal. It used to be that all that was at our disposal was a road map. Back in the day I would even often stop by the local Papa John’s to get an address. Those pizza delivery guys know every street in the neighborhood. Now we get directions off our phones. We not only knowing how to get where we are going, but when we will get there.

Some go by instinct when it comes to getting to their destination. I have been known to do that, and I have gotten lost more times than not. I have even had people lead the way. I will ask someone for directions, and they will say, *“Come follow me.”* You always get where you are going when someone leads the way.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," says Jesus. When it comes to finding our way to the Father, Jesus leads the way. He not only gives us directions, but leads the way, a way that takes us to the very foot of the cross where forgiveness is offered, and newness of life is ours.

And Christ does not stop there. He leads us from the cross to the empty tomb. It is there that we experience the hope and promise that death does not have the last word. I have said it often, *"In Christ, we experience abundant life now and eternal life later on."* For me, this is the good news Jesus comes to offer.

Relationship with God

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," says Jesus, *"no one comes to the Father except through me."*

The good news in all of this is that through Jesus there is the offer of a relationship with God that is possible by no other means. Jesus is proof that God was willing to go to any lengths so to claim us as his own.

So many these days get caught up in trying to discern who gets in and who does not. That's way above our *"pay grade,"* if you know what I mean. Quite frankly, I leave all of that to God Almighty, who is, after all, a loving, righteous judge. What I do concern myself with is taking the opportunity to share the good news about Jesus to all who will listen.

Well-Assured

I like the story told of the man who every morning read the obituaries in his local newspaper. A friend who knew this about him decided to play a trick. He pulled some strings with the newspaper and had his friend's name and picture printed in the obits one morning.

The morning the obit came out, the man opened the paper and to his surprise there he was. Immediately, he called his friend and asked him if he had seen the paper.

"Why yes," said the friend with a hint of disbelief in his voice. *"Is that really you? I cannot believe it."*

"Yes, it's me," as the two continued talk.

"Oh, by the way," asked the friend, *"do you mind if I ask where you're calling from?"*

For those of us who so believe, let us be well-assured about where we are going. That is the hope and promise we have in the One who is *"the way, the truth, and the life."*

- The One who extends comfort when our hearts are troubled.
- The One who by dying on the cross paves the way for our forgiveness.
- The One who by rising from the dead leads us beyond this life to the next.
- And the One who invites us to his table so we might share in his presence through these common elements of bread and cup.

May God bless us all.