

# What Do We Do When Our Plans Fall Through?

## 4) When Our Hearts Are Troubled

John 14:1-6 • 2020-05-10 • Easter Series



My wife and I used to take special note how one of our children who knew how to always get himself into trouble. If there was a way to get injured, he'd figure it out. We even joked that we had to bring along a first-aid kit just for him whenever we left the house. One day he gave us a scare when he was on the top of a playground slide. Somehow, he managed to come down the slide but not on the slide part. We saw him go headfirst off the edge. He fell off the top edge all the way down. Thanks to God he landed on his side and not his neck. There were no broken bones and he was okay. But we never looked at playground slides the same. Our hearts skip a beat every time the kids climb up a slide. That single event has made us paranoid on playgrounds instead of peaceful. Have you ever had that type of an experience? One moment you're playing on the playground of life and having fun, then the next moment your heart is troubled and shaken. It happens to all of us. Life is full of things that can rob us of our security and joy and make us feel troubled. We make plans for a fun day or an easy life and our plans fall through. Our hearts sink. God knows how our hearts are troubled when our plans fall through, and we are unnerved by something. Today we see Jesus responding to his disciples' troubled hearts. His response calms every heart that trusts in him.

The disciples thought they were approaching the pinnacle of Jesus' ministry. He had recently told them, "The time is coming for me to be glorified." The disciples were no doubt hoping this meant that Jesus would soon sit on his throne, bring about world peace, and end all suffering. Their hearts must have lifted at that announcement. But Jesus told them news which caused their hearts to sink. "I am going. And where I am going you cannot follow me now." They slowly began to understand what Jesus meant that day. They would follow him into the dark night. He would cry out loudly with his face in the dirt as he prayed. He would be betrayed by his own friend. He would be arrested, bound, beaten, and crucified. For them this must have felt like the biggest turn around for the worse. It's no wonder Jesus has to say to them, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Their hearts must have sunk just as the sun sunk over the horizon that night. It was the night before Jesus' death. They couldn't follow him because he was going to die.

Death is perhaps the most unsettling thing for our hearts. The mere threat of it can trouble our hearts. It's often left me with the feeling of uneasiness. Our first-aid kit child wasn't the only one who gave us grey hairs. There was a window of only a few months in which every one of my children nearly died. Right around the time of the slide fall another child became terribly ill. We had to take him to the emergency room because he was so sick. The illness had him completely listless. For four days he was hooked up to an IV. I'm sure he would have died without that emergency aid from the hospital. Thanks to God he recovered. But we've never felt safe after that whenever one of our children gets a fever. Not too long after that I was out biking with the older children. When I reached a busy street I stopped, thinking that the children behind me would also stop. One of them decided they didn't want to stop and veered strait ahead into the busy street. Thanks to God the oncoming car swerved narrowly missing running over that child. God kept another one safe. But it was a long time before we felt safe taking a bike ride. It was unnerving. The next week or so had warm weather. A family invited us to go swimming in their pool. One child had just started swimming lessons and thought he knew how to swim. He decided to abandon his floatation device in the deep end. He instantly sank helplessly down under the water. If someone hadn't shouted out in alarm he would have drowned for sure. Swimming lessons took on a whole new sense of urgency and importance that day. My heart can't forget the sight of that struggle.

These are just unsettling near misses of what happens all the time. Believe it or not, hundreds of thousands of children go to the emergency room each year from playground accidents. Some of them die. Sadly, ten children drown each day in our country. Car and biking accidents kill and injure hundreds of thousands of children each year. Statistics are all over regarding how many children die from illness each year. It does happen. It seems it may be increasing this year too.

Our hearts become troubled so quickly! I've known several people who have faced a traumatic event which has altered the course of their life. There are those who have been in car accidents and can no longer ride in a vehicle or drive without extreme anxiety. There are those who have been betrayed by their spouse and have completely lost the ability to trust people or make themselves vulnerable by opening their hearts to others. There are those who have experienced tragic events because they work in the medical field, military, or other first responder position. Those tragic scenes of war, crime, and accident can leave a person scarred for life. There are even many parents who have faced a loss which no one knows about because of a miscarriage. They are afraid of it happening or can't get past it. Life turns from joyful to fearful and it makes our hearts uneasy. It even paralyzes us.

Things were going to quickly turn around for the disciples in a shocking way. How did Jesus console his disciples when their hearts began to be troubled? "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me." His response is to remind us to trust in him.

We can trust no matter what happens our Father has a plan to take us to be safely at home. *"In my Father's house are many mansions (many rooms) I am going 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, so that you may also be where I am."* Notice Jesus doesn't promise us that he will take away every danger in this world. His isn't to give us immunity from trouble. It is far better. His plan is to take us out of this world of trouble to a perfect and secure place. God's ultimate plan involves brining us with him to his new creation. We are so used to things that disrupt and destroy our peace that we can't even picture what such a place would be like. All we need to know is that it is with Jesus and in the house of God our Father. In the presence of our Triune God we will be free from all dangers. Death will be forever gone. Danger will be unknown. Then the prophecy of Ezekiel will be fulfilled in which God promises, "there they will live securely." (Ezekiel 28)

How can we be so sure that there is such a place for us? Jesus has promised it. In order that our hearts might no longer be troubled his was greatly troubled in our place. "My heart is troubled within me..." That's because he knew that he would be facing. He had to leave the security of his Father's arms and go to the cross. He knew what was before him: all the suffering and trouble that ought to come upon every sinner. And it wasn't coming upon him unexpectedly. He planned for it. In order that we might be able to join him in eternal life in his eternal home, he came to this world of trouble. He deserved no trouble or pain. But he willingly suffered the trouble of sin in our place. With greatest agony on the cross he took all our sorrow.

But God's plan doesn't end in trouble. He rose back to life in glory. The time had come for him to be glorified. Then, to complete his promise, he has gone where we cannot now go. He has ascended into glory. He is now sitting on his throne. He did bring about everlasting peace. And he will put an end forever to all our suffering. And just as promised he is preparing a place for us so that we can be with him. And he will come back again one day to take us to be with him.

The disciples were still troubled because they weren't certain if they could find the way to the secure and safe place Jesus promised. Thomas asked, "How can we know the way to where you're going?" Jesus' answer is one which we only need trust. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Through Jesus we find the way to our home. He speaks the truth as the very Son of God. And he lives to give us eternal life with him. It is only through him that we can escape the troubles which face our hearts. We believe that he is the Savior who died, rose again, and who will come back again to take us home.

After all, when our hearts are troubled by fear of tragedy isn't it because our confidence in our own ability to provide safety and security is crushed? Our hearts are troubled when we focus only on our own methods for safety. If a parent will only let a child go on the playground with climbing gear and a helmet would that solve their fears? If a first responder would be the most prepared to shoot the criminal or medically provide aid would that remove their fears? We can take measures to try to stay safe and protect. We can do things which provide some measure of security. But it still can't calm our troubled hearts. Today's pandemic is evidence that no matter how prepared you are, things can suddenly and unexpectedly change all your plans. We need to do more than trust in our own selves and our own measures of security if we are to ever get past troubled hearts. We will never find our hearts at rest if they are looking for freedom from troubles in this world. We need to trust in and rely on a higher plan and higher power and a greater plan for security.

Please don't misunderstand. Jesus isn't saying it's wrong to take caution and to try to avoid troubles. Personal protective equipment, seatbelts, ER visits, and the like are all alright and useful. Jesus never says those are bad things. They are not bad if they are not your ultimate source of trust. Left to themselves every plan for security will leave your heart troubled. When we face troubles today, we only have two options. We can trust our own plans and our own methods for safety. We can grab the first-aid kit, the handgun, and complete the safety training course, and put on all our personal protective equipment. But it doesn't matter how many hand washings you observe. It really won't matter how many swimming lessons you take. All the home securities measure you set won't do. It won't matter how many times you head to the firing range. It won't even matter how well you avoid illness that counts in the end. Our plans fall through and are disrupted, and our hearts are left troubled. Death is a constant fear if you have no solution for it. The only way to calm your troubled heart today is to trust today in your God. Trust in Jesus. He tells you "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe in me." He has a plan to remove you from all your troubles and bring you to a place free from all danger. And one day will forever bring you to his place of peace and rest. And troubles will forever be gone.

Jesus said, "Where I am going you cannot come...you cannot follow now." But we will follow him soon. All the things which cause us fear and trouble now will be gone. We will follow him when he comes to take us to be with him. And we will live in our new and perfect home. We will be with our God forever. And our hearts will be forever at peace.