MY FATHER’S HOUSE

John 14:1–14

Key Verses 14:2,3

“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.”

Have you ever felt homeless? It’s hard to feel like you don’t belong anywhere. We all crave a permanent place, some real security. In today’s passage Jesus speaks to his disciples personally about this. These are some of the most comforting words in the Bible. If we pay attention, he promises some amazing things. And he reassures us about finding our way in the world, and about how we should live based on faith in him. May God open our hearts and speak to us personally through his words today.

Look at verse 1. Jesus himself was already “troubled” (12:27; 13:21). He’s the one facing the greatest difficulties—betrayal, rejection and death on a cross. His disciples should be comforting *him*, but instead, *he’s* comforting *them*. Like him, God comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God (2Co1:3,4). At this moment Jesus knows his disciples’ hearts are troubled. He’s just told them some really hard things. He said one of them would betray him. He said Peter would deny him three times. Maybe worst of all, he said he was leaving, and they’d no longer be able to go with him. It seemed like their whole world was crumbling. They felt secure with Jesus up until now, but now, nothing seemed stable anymore. Like them, so many things in life can trouble our hearts. Life often leaves us feeling anxious, afraid, or very, very sad.

What did Jesus say to them at this moment? He said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.” The best solution for a troubled heart is to believe in Jesus. We may not understand what’s happening. We may not get an immediate solution or see anything secure to latch onto. But when things are unsettling and even most discouraging, the best thing to do is to keep on believing in Jesus. In Greek the word means to have confidence in him, to really believe he can help us. It requires that we put our complete trust in him. When bad things happen, we shouldn’t lose our trust in Jesus. Just as we should always trust in God, so we should always trust in Jesus his Son.

Then Jesus goes deeper. Read verses 2,3. Jesus mentions “my Father’s house.” It’s a fascinating way of describing heaven. Jesus says the Father’s house has “many rooms.” He says he has “a place prepared” for each person there. We don’t know how big or fancy it is, but the point is, it’s a place fit just for us, a place where we truly belong. Jesus also says he’s there. He says he’s coming back to get us, and he’s going to take us to be with him forever. In some way we can’t fully understand, we all get to be with Jesus very personally.

We human beings all crave “home.” So there are famous sayings like, “There’s no place like home,” and “Home, Sweet Home.” It may not be a mansion. It may be “ever so humble.” But home is stable and safe. Home is a place where we’re always welcomed and accepted. Home is a place where we truly belong. We want to build such a place here on earth. People work so hard to get their home feeling “just right.” Luxurious houses actually can feel empty and cold and not at all like home. Unfortunately, home on earth is never quite perfect, and it never really lasts. Very few families can hold onto a family home over many generations. We can go back to where we grew up and find everything gone or totally changed, and no one knows us anymore. We can try to go back to various places where we’ve lived, but none of them remain as a place where we belong. So where is “home,” really?

In the musical *West Side Story*, the American young man Tony and the Puerto Rican young woman Maria fall in love, but they quickly find that they don’t fit in, neither with his people nor with hers. They experience prejudice, violence, isolation, and they want to run away from it all, with very little time left. They long for a place just for them, and they sing a song called “Somewhere.” They’re really singing about heaven—a place of peace and quiet, a place where there’s plenty of time to be together, to care for each other, and a place of forgiveness. It’s such a beautiful hope. God our Creator knows the personal longing of our souls. He knows we’re longing for our true home in heaven, where all our needs are met by being with him. And he’s made a way to bring us back there, through Jesus.

The disciples didn’t understand that Jesus had to leave them and that they couldn’t go with him right now. But through his death and resurrection he was preparing a way for them to be with him forever. And he promised to come back and take them to be with him. He basically said, “I’m coming back to get you.” That’s not always easy to believe. My grandfather came to America all alone when he was just 15 years old, to work in a factory in Minnesota. Soon he joined the American army during World War I. Afterwards, he went back to his country to marry. His new wife, who was a teenager, was suddenly pregnant. While leaving for his job back in America, he told his new wife, “I’ll send for you when I can.” While waiting to hear from him, it must have been hard for her. Finally, a letter and the money to travel came after the baby was born. But sadly, sometimes we’re forgotten, even by the people we thought cared for us. We can feel left behind, and all alone. But Jesus promises that when we believe in him, he’ll never forget us or leave us behind. He’s coming back specifically for each person who believes in him. We all need to hold onto his promise personally: Jesus is coming back for me. He’s coming back to take me back to my eternal home with him. When we believe this, even if we have to suffer now, we feel stable and secure, and very sure of where life is headed. Read verses 2,3 again.

In verse 4 Jesus says, “You know the way to the place where I am going.” Basically he meant, “You know me.” But how did the disciples respond? Look at verse 5. Thomas was thinking very literally. He wanted to know the exact destination as if it were a physical place on earth. How did Jesus respond to him? Read verse 6. Jesus ignores Thomas’ comment about the destination and emphasizes who he is. It’s one of the most important verses in the Bible, and it’s one of the seven “I am” statements in John’s Gospel. Jesus is “the way.” What does it mean? It means Jesus is the only way of salvation. Only Jesus can save us from our sins, because only Jesus made atonement for our sins on the cross. Only Jesus saves us from death, because only Jesus rose from the dead to give eternal life. Only Jesus opened the way for sinful human beings to have our broken relationship with our Father God restored. We can’t save ourselves with our own effort or goodness; we need to come to Jesus the way so that we can draw close to God himself.

Jesus also says he is “the truth” and “the life.” Sometimes it’s uncomfortable and we gloss over it, but we human beings need truth. Jesus “the truth” shows us all the truth about God, all the truth about ourselves and all the truth about this world. There are so many half-truths, so much deception, so many subtle lies. But Jesus is the truth. We also need not just to exist physically, but to really be alive. Jesus the life is the only one who gives us eternal life after death, and abundant life now. When we follow Jesus the way, trusting him, we come to know the truth. As we come to know his truth, we experience this amazing life in him. We shouldn’t get sidetracked—we all need to come to Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life, so that we can really get connected to our Father God.

Look at verse 7. Jesus makes God known to us in the most personal way (cf. 1:18). As we get to know Jesus better and better, we come to know God more and more personally. How did the disciples respond to this? Look at verse 8. Philip was so smart. He wanted to skip the process and jump right to the conclusion. What did Jesus say to him? Read verses 9–11. Basically Jesus is saying that he is God Incarnate. Philip has already seen the Father plainly in Jesus the Son. The concept that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus is repeated several times in John’s Gospel (10:38; 14:10,11,20; 17:21). Why? It’s because when we see the Father in Jesus, we can believe in him. How can we see the Father in Jesus? He says here it’s both “the words” and “the works.” As we listen to what Jesus said and reflect on the miracles he did, we can clearly see God the Father in him, and then we can believe in him.

But what does it really mean to “believe” in him? Read verse 12. It’s remarkable! Jesus says that if we believe in him, we will do what he did. For most of us, that seems impossible. How can I do what Jesus did? But he insists on it, and he even says we will do “greater things than these.” That seems impertinent and too audacious. Who has ever done anything greater than Jesus? But Jesus says that if we believe in him, we will. What did he mean? He says, “because I am going to the Father.” In this case he means that his time on earth is over. Those who believe in him can remain on this earth longer, and thus have more time to do the things Jesus did.

Jesus goes on to tell us a secret of how we can do what he did. Read verses 13,14. We can’t do anything, but if we pray, God can answer and work in and through us. It tells us what a great privilege prayer is. What does it mean to “ask in his name”? It means to ask by faith in Jesus. It means to ask in accordance with his character and will. We can’t use God like a genie in a bottle to get whatever we want. But if we ask depending on Jesus and what he did for us, and seeking to do what he did, God will surely answer.

So what are the things Jesus did, the things he wants us to be doing? Jesus humbled himself and lived among sinful and weak human beings. Jesus revealed God’s glory through his life. Jesus turned water into wine, symbolizing that he can change people. Jesus planted faith in his disciples. Jesus helped all kinds of people, from the top of society to the bottom. Jesus healed those who were crippled and blind. Jesus fed people whose needs were way greater than anyone could meet. Jesus was a good shepherd for vulnerable sheep. Jesus gave God’s words to people who were confused and lost. Jesus followed God’s will for him very carefully. When we believe and pray, we can do these things, too. When we believe and pray, we can be the hands of feet of Jesus in this fallen and messed up world.

Read verses 2,3 again. May God help us accept these words of our Lord Jesus very personally, that he’s preparing a place for us in the Father’s house. May the hope of our eternal home shine in our hearts even as we have to live in this hard world. And may we learn to believe in Jesus, pray and do the things he did.