



“Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled!?”

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Hello dear Ones:

I find I simply can't preach a sermon that doesn't somehow reflect the reality of the time we are in...I thought I'd try for some eternal truth to share...

Turns out, that I find that every “eternal verity” of scripture is adaptable for us poor confused human beings, who can only see so much, accept so much, and live through our own days of confusion and anguish with such truth as we can see.

As it turns out, I go again and again to the truth I know: that God is Love.

I hope this sermon is useful to you, and in case you want to join us in real time, we have a Sunday morning Zoom link on our website: www.westminsterucc.org

Or, you can find us on facebook. Just type in, Westminster United Church of Christ.

I pray you are well, send you love from afar,
Andy

Scripture (NRSV):

John 14:1-4

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled.

You believe in God, believe also in me.

²In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

Sermon:

This is a favorite text.

I've used it times past counting in sermons.

It's one of the most requested texts...at funerals.

I believe this morning is the first time I will be preaching on this text, and not officiating at a funeral or memorial service.

You can see why it is a text that is frequently used:

It is comforting.

It is reassuring.

When your heart is breaking with the loss of your loved one...Jesus speaks words of comfort.

When you are uncertain how you will endure the loss of that person from your life, Jesus declares that they are not taken from you forever, rather, they are in the house of God which is spacious enough for everyone.

But this is not a funeral today.

No one has died.

We do not need comfort or reassurance, standing before a casket, or an urn of ashes.

Or do we?

279,705 people have died in the world from COVID19.

78,794 have died in the United States.

Since December.

From this one virus.

This virus has stalled the economies of the world.

It has forced us into isolation.

It has created a vast multitude of unemployed people.

Turns out that in fact, we do need comfort and we do need reassurance!

“Do not let your hearts be troubled”?

But they are!

I have days, and I bet you do, too, when I am simply weighed down with grief for our world. When I am weighed down with the grief of the shortages, the inequities in care, the violence, the scheming and the lies, the brave people who serve, yet are afraid, or succumb to the virus...

My heart is troubled, and I am anxious.

It was such a hard week for my heart this week, that I had to be reminded of my own sermon words to you from weeks ago: “Admit your feelings, recognize your feelings, and let them move through you.”

Jesus continues, “You believe in God, believe in me, too”.

Believing in God is not an intellectual thing, it is a gut thing.

It is a feeling in my heart and in my stomach, in my very bones; that I am held by Love that will not let me go.

That I can trust in a Wisdom and a Goodness that is greater than me. It is huge, and it is mysterious, and it moves the world, and spins the planets, and works through all that exists, to create more Love and more Life and more beauty.

And I can trust in Jesus, too. Jesus knows all about trouble. He knows sadness and sorrow, betrayal, that hurt to the heart when you are abandoned by your friends. And physical hurt, and physical suffering, and physical death.

Yet still he says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled”.

If you know me, and my preaching, you know that I love this world; from the science of the cosmos to the glory of the grandbabies, from the beauty of music and of art, to the soul stretching mystical communion that can envelop you in a beautiful sunrise, or a night thick with stars.

Yes, I love this world.

But I trust in Jesus when he tells me of another home, a place of “rooms” in the home of God.

And, Jesus says, “you know the way there”...

It is not a complicated way, though it is hard work. It is the Way of Love.

Love and justice.

Love and compassion.

Love and mercy.

Love and hope.

Love and laughter.

Love and service.

Love and forgiveness.

It is that “gut” thing you know not just in your head, but in your heart, in your very bones.

You and me, find our way to the place that Jesus is preparing for us, through love.

Always living with some sort of love to stretch us, teach us, prepare us to receive the great Love of God.

That love is with us now, in this pandemic. In this terrible time of losses. In this time of confusion and uncertainty. In this dark time in which injustice and ignorance and inequity are brought into sharp relief through the actions of our leaders, and the inactions of our leaders!

Even in this, Love is Here.

God is Here.

And the only answer I hear, when I cry out to the heavens, “what shall I do, my heart is troubled!?”...is Love.

Love with justice.

Love with compassion.

Love with mercy.

Love with hope.

Love with laughter.

Love with service.

Love with forgiveness.

This is the way through this pandemic, this is the Way of Life. Amen.