

Great Verses of the Bible
So You Can Be with Me
John 14:1-3
July 9, 2023
Pastor John Mars

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church! We continue our series of sermons of great passages of the Bible. The passage that I am going to read this morning, you have probably heard many times. It's from John, chapter 14, beginning with verse 1, Jesus speaking. He says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust 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 also may be where I am." May God bless the reading of His Word.

Lord willing and the creek don't rise, one day Jeannine and I plan on retiring. I don't know when; that's in God's hands. When God says, "You can retire," I'll retire, and we may have to argue about that. I don't know where. All I know is my wife, Jeannine, is a mountain girl. I am an ocean guy. So that kind of narrows it down a little bit. That takes out the Gulf Coast. That takes out most of the Atlantic coast. And that leaves the Pacific coast of the Americas. But it can't be too cold. It can't be too hot. So, I guess we will have to compromise somewhere between our desires and our budget. You know what I mean? I don't know when we're going to retire; I don't know where we're going to retire; but I know where my ultimate retirement home will be. This plaque (I know you can't see it, so don't try) has hung in my office for forty years. It reads: "Working for the Lord doesn't pay much, but the retirement is out of this world."

Jesus, in our passage, says, "I want you to be with Me." And, as I understand it, if I want to be with Jesus and Jesus wants me to be with Him, it will be so. The passage I have just read, we usually use in a different context. Normally it is used during Celebrations of Life. Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled; neither let them be afraid. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In my Father's house there are many dwellings, and I'm going there to prepare one for you. And if I go and prepare one for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself so that you can be with Me. Therefore, do not let your hearts be troubled; neither let them be afraid." Those are called "The Words of Grace," and they're often used to begin a Celebration of Life service, but I want to use them in a completely different context today. Yes, they do address the hereafter. But I want you today to hear them address the here and now, because Jesus gave them to His disciples to prepare them for what was going to happen in this life, not just the life to come. These are words of encouragement for the future, yes, but they're words of encouragement and comfort now. Jesus begins with one of the most common themes of the New Testament: Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid of God. Do not be afraid of death. Do not be afraid of the hereafter, and do not be afraid of life now. Do not be afraid.

Jesus speaks these words to his disciples a couple of days before their life was going to be turned upside down. Their world was going to descend into chaos. Everything they

thought they knew was about to be turned upside down, and Jesus gives them these words to help them through the chaos of life. From time to time that happens, doesn't it? Have you ever had your world absolutely turned upside down? Has it ever descended into chaos? During those times, the only thing you've got left is trust in God. Sometimes we must believe what cannot be proven and trust what we do not understand, and that can be very difficult. But in this passage, Jesus tells us why we can. He says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God." Do you? Do you believe in God? Okay. Jesus said, "If you believe in God, believe also in Me," not just believe in God. "If you believe in God, believe also in Me," not just for the hereafter, but for the here and now. If the people of the Old Covenant, if the people of the Old Testament could believe in God and trust God in the midst of chaos, how much more can we? How much more can we, who have experienced Jesus Christ? How much more can we, who see God in Jesus Christ? How much more can we put our trust in God, who have seen Jesus portray God? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." We who have experienced that, how much more can we put our trust in God? Jesus said, "You believe in God? Believe in Me, too. And if you believe in Me, if you believe in Me, when the storms of life happen, you can have calm in the midst of them." Even in the midst of the storms of life, we can believe and trust in God because of the love He showed us in Christ. Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. You believe in God? Believe also in Me." That's not just trust for the hereafter, that's trust for the here and now. This passage is not just for the life after this life, it is for the life that we have now.

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. You believe in God? Believe also in Me. In my Father's house, there are many dwellings." Now, drive down a peg there and I'll be back in just a moment. One of my practices, one of my personal disciplines is, even when I'm doing a passage of scripture that is so, so, so very familiar and we use it all the time, I go back and I read what other people think about the passage. And when you get to this section of this passage about "in My Father's house there are many dwellings," there are reams of material of how you might possibly be able to interpret that. Okay? There are all kinds of theories and all kinds of speculations, yada, yada, yada, yada. I call it fluff and puff and stuff. But when you boil it all down, when you boil it all down and you get down to the brass tacks of what Jesus said in that passage, this is what He said. And folks, this is good. This is good stuff. What He said was: "In my Father's house, there's room for you." Y'all hear that? There's room for you, not just in the hereafter but in the here and now. With God, there's room for you. No matter who you are, there is room for you now in God's house, in God's presence. "In My Father's house, there is room for you." Housing may not be available here; Lord knows we had trouble enough finding a house in Richland. But there's always room in our Father's house for us, here, now, and in the hereafter. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house, here and now and in the hereafter, there's room for you, and I am going to prepare a place for you."

Jesus said, "I am going to prepare a place for you." That is not just in the future; that is here and now. The last promise Jesus made to his disciples is: "I will never leave you or forsake you. I will be with you always, even until the very end." That's just not in the future; that is here and now. He is preparing a place for you. And He says, "If I prepare a

place for you, I will come back to you. I will come to you.” That doesn't just mean when we die; that means when your world turns into chaos. That means when the storms of life gather around you, Christ will come to you; Christ will be with you; and Christ will see you through those times. So, do not be afraid. You have that promise. He will come to us individually or collectively.

I had a cousin who had a gerbil. Y'all know what a gerbil is? Yeah, it's just kind of a rat thingy. And it's a fancy name for a short-tailed rat, I guess. It was a gerbil. And this gerbil had one of those wheels that just go round and round in circles, you know? And that gerbil would get on that wheel and just he'd go boogity, boogity, boogity, boogity, boogity, boogity, and never go anywhere, until he stopped. And when he stopped, the wheel would throw him up against the side of cage. Sometimes life feels that way, doesn't it? You just go boogity, boogity, boogity, boogity. You don't go anywhere until you stop, and life throws you up against the side of the cage. Look, what Jesus is telling us when He says, “I'm coming back for you,” that means your life and my life are going somewhere. The light at the end of the tunnel is not a train. It's not a train; it's Christ. “I'm going to prepare a place for you so that when the storms of life happen, or when this life ends, you can be with Me.”

I don't know what heaven is going to be like. As I read scripture, I know there's a river that flows from the throne of God. I know there's a crystal sea. There's got to be fish. I don't know what heaven is going to be like, but I know Jesus said, “I'm coming for you, so that you can be with Me.”

So, I don't know when I'm going to retire. That's in God's hands. I don't know where I'm going to retire. But I do know that home will be where Jeannine is, and it'll be okay. And we'll compromise and live where Jeannine wants! So, I don't know about those kind of things. I don't know about those kind of things, but I know Jesus said, “Don't be afraid. You believe in God; believe also in me. And in my Father's house there's room for you, and I'm going to prepare that room for you so you can be with Me.” And what I want you to hear today is that's not just in the hereafter, that's in the here and now. And you can have that type of calm and that type of peace even when the world is swirling around you. You can have peace in the midst of the storms of your life. Let's pray.

Lord, we are so, so, so very grateful to know that there is already a place prepared for us in the hereafter. And so we don't worry about that, Lord. That's in Your hands. But right here and right now we are so, so, so very grateful to know that, during the storms of life, You have promised there's a place for us, and that You will come to us, and that You will be with us, and that You will help us through the difficulties that we face. And Lord, for this we give You praise. In Christ's name, amen.