

“Heart Trouble”

John 13:33-14:6

March 13, 2011

Peter Hiatt

Song: “Last Supper”

Look at all my trials and tribulations
Sinking in a gentle pool of wine.
Don't disturb me now, I can see the answers
'Till this evening is this morning, life is fine.

Always hoped that I'd be an apostle.
Knew that I would make it if I tried.
Then when we retire, we can write the Gospels,
So they'll still talk about us when we've died.

Message

That song is from *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I think it accurately describes the state of the disciples at the Last Supper. They had great plans, and now Jesus is talking crazy talk.

John 13:33-36:

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?”

It makes sense that Peter would be the one to ask this question. You might remember in Matthew 16, Jesus says to Peter, “You are *Petros* [it means rock], and on this rock I will build my church.” I think Peter heard, “You will build my church.”

The word “church” means “people called out.” Israel was to be the church, Jerusalem was to be the church, and now the 12 disciples are somehow the church. The church is the society of God on earth. And so every believer has a part in its construction. Church is the society in this room...but it's also your friends and family. It's society in subjection to God. It's “the kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” It's life.

Well, Peter feels responsible for that. Actually we all do. So Peter has been developing a plan (almost subconsciously) with his free will or what he thinks is his free will. He takes his knowledge of good and evil and constructs a plan—a way to get to church; his way to build the kingdom. And he has rules for the implementation of his plan:

1. The first, of course, is this: “Peter, do not fail. Do not lose control.”
2. Second, of course, is this: “Don't let anything bad happen to Jesus. Above all, don't let Him be crucified.”

So Peter says to Jesus, “Lord where are you going?”

John 13:36:

Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. [Ironic: "I'll die for you.]" Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times."

Imagine how Peter felt at that moment. Jesus is leaving, the disciples are failing, Satan is raging... In Luke, it's at this point that Jesus says to Peter, "Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed that your faith would not fail." So Jesus tells Peter:

1. I'm leaving.
2. By the way, Peter—Rock, before this evening is over, you will deny me three times. You will fail.

If I'm Peter, what do I do now? I get troubled in order to fix the trouble. I implement my plan for faithfulness. If I'm Peter, I get troubled. And if I'm Jesus, what do I say next? "Peter, this should trouble you! This should motivate you to adjust something and take some steps to get back on plan. Get troubled so you can fix the trouble!"

And there *is* trouble:

- Jesus is leaving. He will be crucified in the morning. The earth will shake and the sun will fail. Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple will all fail.
- Judas will hang himself in Gehenna.
- Satan will rage, and all the disciples will flee.
- And now Jesus informs Peter (the Pope), "Tonight you will deny me three times."

And what's the very next thing that Jesus says?

[Peter snapping, whistling, and singing:]

Here is a little song I wrote,
You might want to sing it note for note:
Don't worry, be happy.
In every life we have some trouble,
When you worry you make it double,
Don't worry, be happy....

"Jesus, this is the wrong time to sing the 'don't worry be happy' song!" But check it out: "The rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." Next verse:

John 14:1:

"Let not your hearts be troubled..."

Chapter divisions were added to Scripture 1500 years after this was written. So originally, this is all one statement with no break in the text. Jesus says, "You and your plans will fail. Don't worry; be happy. Don't let your heart be troubled."

That's troubling!

Troubling my heart is how I get things done! John 14:27: “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” I mean, if I wasn’t motivated by fear, I might not be motivated at all.

Fear of not getting paid
Fear of embarrassment
Fear the sermon will stink
Fear that I might disappoint God or be sent to Hell
Fear that I have to preach a sermon on not letting your heart be troubled when mine heart is troubled
Fear that I might be “last or least” or that I might “lose my life” or lose control

If it weren’t for fear, I doubt that I’d make any plans at all, get anything done at all, work or run at all. Without fear, I’d be terrified. “Let not your hearts be troubled.” It’s a command. You see, it’s not that Peter and the guys just don’t have to be afraid. Jesus is commanding them not to be afraid. It’s like fear is not the way to where they need to get. Like fear may cause you to run but run in the wrong direction.

Richard Rohr writes, “The greatest enemy of faith is not doubt; the greatest enemy of faith is fear. Most of the world is controlled by fear. Petty fears control people. Great fears control nations.” Soren Kierkegaard writes, “It’s true, fear deceptively offers to help us. It offers to keep us on the right track. Yet the one who strives in fear never becomes God’s friend. Fear is a deceitful aid.... The good will not tolerate any alien helper.”

My wife heard the Lord say, “With fear you put flesh on the Evil One.” “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,” but it’s not the end. 1 John 4:18: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” If I choose fear, I cast myself from the presence of love. And God is love. So fear puts flesh on the Evil One. And faith puts flesh on God. And you are that flesh. You are His body, His house, His church.

You can’t build the church with fear.

But like Peter, I try to build God’s house with fear. I make plans in fear and guard them in fear. I try to build the church with fear, and when I fail, I get so troubled I cry out to God, “I don’t know what to do! What’s the plan? What do I do? What do I do?” But He has told me what to do. “Peter, let not your heart be troubled.” Even when you fail. Especially when you fail.

Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding [your plans]. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your path.”

Trust in the Lord, and He will move the path under your feet.
Trust in the Lord, and He will adjust all creation.
Trust in the Lord, and He will adjust the plan. And that’s the plan.
Trust in the Lord, and He will build His church, and the gates of Hell can’t stop it.

Well, how do we trust in the Lord? “Don’t let your hearts be troubled.” How? Winston Churchill said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Great! So now I’m afraid of being afraid! How can fear cast out fear or Satan cast out Satan? Should I be troubled that my heart might be troubled? Isn’t that just more trouble?—more me? And that’s trouble.

“Let not your heart be troubled.” But was Jesus troubled? Check it out:

- John 11:33: Jesus is troubled by Mary, Martha, and Lazarus’ troubles.
- John 12:27: Jesus says His soul is troubled at the thought of His crucifixion.

- John 13:21: Jesus' spirit is troubled as He says, "One of you will betray me."
- And when He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He seemed pretty troubled.

Jesus is not to blame for any of that trouble. We are. So it's like He takes our troubles and tells us not to be troubled. You know, Jesus went where we cannot go. On the cross, He took our troubles and bore them to destruction. Theologically we'd say:

On the cross, He took our sin and bore it to destruction.
 On the cross, He took our flesh and bore it to destruction.
 On the cross, He delivered our plans to God's plan, and that's the plan.
 On the cross, Jesus revealed the depths of God's love: grace.

How do I not let my heart be troubled?
 By seeing that Jesus bears my troubles, my failures.
 By seeing love, and love casts out fear...my old prison of fear, my flesh.

Once I really had a supernatural encounter with the love of God for me. It was so utterly bizarre for about a month: I found it almost impossible to worry. I couldn't choose fear, only faith. And then as I walked through this world, it wore off.

Well, Jesus says, "Peter, you will fail." I think that's my greatest fear.

John 14:1:

Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, you believe also in me.

It's interesting that Judas isn't with them when Jesus says this. Jesus revealed that Judas wasn't clean (John 15:3). It's the Word that makes us clean. That word had found "no place in Judas" (John 8:27). It doesn't mean it will never find a place, but for now Judas will be trapped in his trouble. So to the 11 Jesus says, "You believe." The statement can be translated in either the indicative or imperative tense, as either a statement of fact or a command. Well, if it's a command, John has made it clear it's not a command that we can simply decide to do.

"Believe"—that means trust; that is, have faith. It's all one word group.
 Have faith, and faith is a gift.
 Faith is a miracle.
 Faith is life begotten in us.

Faith is something that God creates within us by grace, like a baby is created in the womb of a woman. A mother can't take credit for making a baby. Yet the bride must surrender to the groom. We're the Bride, and Jesus is the Groom. We must surrender to our Groom. We must fall in love with our Groom. But if we take credit for falling in love, we haven't fallen in love. And if we think we can just make a baby, we haven't seen a real baby. We haven't seen real fruit.

Faith is fruit.
 Faith is the Word of God finding a place in us, and the word is "a seed"; in Greek, a *sperma*.
 Faith is the Word "begotten" in us.
 Faith is choosing the good in freedom.
 Faith is choosing God above all else; choosing God, and God is love.
 Faith is a good, free will.
 Faith is free will, and God wants faith.

Yet according to John, it seems everyone is predestined. In chapter 12, the Pharisees are predestined. John 12:19: "Therefore, they could not believe." John 13:21: "One of you will betray me." Judas is predestined. John 13:38: "Peter, you will deny me three times." It is predestined. It's all according to plan, even your failure, especially your failure. Israel, the Pharisees, Judas, Peter...all your plans will submit to God's plan. You will be frustrated! It's predestined.

Last week Susan and I saw a pretty interesting movie. It was ridiculous in places, but it sure raised non-ridiculous questions like, "Are we predestined?" and, "Is there such a thing as free will?"

[Movie trailer: *The Adjustment Bureau*:]

Woman: *Just staring at my legs?*

Man 1: *I was defenseless against the small dress.*

Narrator: *What if every choice you made was controlled by a higher plan? Their plan.*

Man 1: *Hey!*

Man 2: *Grab him.*

Man 2: *What you've just seen behind the curtain that you weren't even supposed to know even existed.*

Man 3: *You can change the world. That doesn't happen if you stay with her.*

Narrator: *Fight for your fate.*

Man 1: *They want to take you away from me!"*

Man 3: *We tried to reason with you.*

Narrator: *The Adjustment Bureau.*

The Adjustment Bureau makes sure you follow the plan. One of the messengers from the Adjustment Bureau says, "You only think you have free will." People are free to choose a pizza or cheeseburger, but all the choices that matter are predetermined according to The Plan. The Adjustment Bureau is like "the principalities and powers of this world." In Scripture, fallen humanity is under the control of fallen angels. Yet even they are being controlled by God and His angels. Even Satan is predestined according to The Plan. John describes it in The Revelation.

Well, in the movie, according to plan, Matt Damon's character is destined to be President, which is his plan. Emily Blunt's character is destined to be a great choreographer, and that's her plan. But an angel misses an assignment, such that Matt and Emily meet on a bus and begin to fall in love...which is *not* according to plan. The angels try to get them back on plan. They inform Matt that unless he complies, they'll erase his mind. He'll lose his life. So during the whole movie, you wonder, "What's the plan? Predestination or free will?"

Jesus said, "You believe." Is that a command or a statement of fact? If it's a command, it couldn't be one we simply choose to obey. Perhaps it's a comment like, "Let there be light," or "Let us make man in our own image and likeness."

"Let there be faith." It could be a command, but we *know* it's a statement of fact: "Peter, let not your heart be troubled, for you do believe." We know that the Word had found a place in Peter, for Jesus said, "Peter, you are clean." And Jesus said, "I've prayed that your faith won't fail." So Peter has some faith. He just doesn't have very much faith. But maybe you don't need much. Maybe all you need is a seed, like a mustard seed. According to Scripture, the Word is a seed, and faith is a seed. In fact, Jesus is the promised seed: an eternal, incorruptible seed.

Karl Barth writes:

One may, of course, be confused, and one may doubt; but whoever once believes has something like an indelible character.... He is being upheld. Everyone who has to contend with unbelief should be advised that he ought not to take his own unbelief too seriously. Only faith is to be taken seriously; and if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, that suffices for the devil to have lost his game.

You see, if faith is in us, the Word of God is begotten in us—fruit of the Spirit in us. If it's the eternal and incorruptible will of God, then just a seed of that stuff is more powerful than all the powers of this earth, all the laws of nature, or anything in all creation. Yet it's not more powerful than God, for it *is* God...in us.

A Christian, a believer in this world, is a prison of arrogance, fear, and self-centered plans, a prison of flesh that contains an eternal seed. "Peter, before the rooster crows, your prison of arrogance will fail, but the seed will not fail." That night, according to plan, Peter's prison—his plans—would fail. But the Seed would not fail. He would give birth to faith—a new heart.

Faith grows in broken soil and empty places. And we give birth to it in tribulation and travail. God troubles our prison of flesh, and what can't be troubled remains: Faith. "Let not your hearts be troubled. You trust in God"—("in me you trust" or "by means of me you trust"). Next verse:

John 14:2-3:

In my Father's house are many rooms...

What is the Father's house? Well, it's His temple, His sanctuary, which is the New Jerusalem, which is His Bride, which is us. John describes it in The Revelation: a house built of us.

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

"I'm leaving to prepare a place," but that place is in us. In verse 23 Jesus even says that room is in us.

Perhaps Jesus leaves to grow faith, hope, and love in what feels like His absence.
Perhaps He leaves to make us long for His presence.
Perhaps He leaves to prepare a place for Him and us, a place for faith conceived in us.

Whatever the case, He leaves that He might have us back forever. The Father's house is the Sanctuary, the Temple, the New Jerusalem, His Bride, Us—filled with Him, His faith-full, Spirit-full, Jesus-full, people. His Church.

Jesus had said, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." / I will build my church. I build it on you, with you. In Revelation 21:4 John sees it: He and Peter are part of the foundation. And that's an amazing thought. We plan and struggle and fail. Peter worked so hard to build the church and couldn't. Yet, all the while, God was building the church...with Peter. We work so hard to build Jerusalem but fail. And all the while, God builds Jerusalem...with us. In Revelation 21, John sees it "coming down."

As all our empty works are filled with grace.
As all our fears are replaced by faith.
As all our anxious plans are consumed by His plan according to plan.
His plan is faith, and faith is a good, free will.

What if the entire world is a factory for faith? A Faith Factory?
What if the entire creation is a factory for free will?
What if we're predestined for freedom?
What if we're predestined to be made in God's image? Predestined to choose love in freedom?

I don't think I'll wreck the movie if I tell you this: At the end of *The Adjustment Bureau*, Matt Damon and Emily Blunt run from the agents sent from the Adjustment Bureau. They run to the top of a tall building where they decide to sacrifice their plans: plans to be a famous choreographer, and plans to be President. They even violate the plans of the Adjustment Bureau. (Human religion is like an Adjustment Bureau: obedience and law.)

Well, realizing they will lose their lives, Matt and Emily sacrifice all the plans for just a moment of love in freedom (a kiss). It's not a plan; it's a choice free of all plans, consequences, and antecedents. As the agents surround them, they proclaim their decisions: love at any cost. And suddenly, all the agents disappear and everything changes. We find that God (the Chairman of the Adjustment Bureau) was so impressed with their free decision of sacrificial love, that He rewrote The Plan.

Well, if you're a Christian, you have to say, "And that was The Plan." The Plan from before time. The Plan to sacrifice all plans for love—love at any cost. Perhaps God arranges all space and time to bring us to a point where we would see love and sacrifice all plans for love. The Plan from the foundation of the world was to create one good choice in freedom, one good choice that would become everyone's choice by grace.

What if the entire creation is a factory for faith in grace?

In John's Revelation, everything is fixed according to plan...what creation will do, what the kings of the earth will do, what the principalities and powers will do... The only question is, "What will these seven, little church do?" So all creation is a stage to see God's choice and surrender to His choice to love the Lamb standing on the throne the way He loves you.

What if all creation is a factory of faith—faith in grace? What if the entire creation is a factory for love? So every plan is part of a great plan? So every choice is fixed...even our bad choices are fixed in order that we might see one choice and make once choice in freedom. What if all creation, cause and effect, the powers of the earth, the laws of nature, are all a set up...that we might see Jesus the Christ and love Him in freedom...that we might surrender all plans. And that's the plan, that's the way, and that's the destination.

John 14:4-6:

"And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

You see, "the way" is not a plan but a person. And God has arranged all things for us to surrender our plans to that person. All creation is a stage for a romance, not between Matt Damon and Emily Blunt, but between Jesus and you—His Bride.

In Scripture, all things happen according to plan, that Jesus might be crucified according to plan, where on the cross He surrenders all plans and chooses love in freedom. He cries, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Why? He didn’t know The Plan, yet He is love, God’s Free Love, from before there was time, before there were plans. Plans exist in time. He is free of all plans, yet he is the foundation of all plans.

Jesus is the free will of God. He is the faith fullness of God. And Jesus gives His very Spirit to you—His free will to you.

Well, that night as the rooster crowed, Peter surrendered his fear, his plans, his flesh, and his control...and his faith didn’t fail. It grew. The seed grew. He couldn’t build the church; he was the church. And Jesus was building him.

Jesus is the way.

And Jesus had said, “You cannot follow me now, but you will follow me later.” According to legend, Peter died in Rome, and it happened this way: The Adjustment Bureau—the authorities—cracked down on the church in Rome. To save the church, Peter told the church to flee. Well, as Peter was running out of Rome, down the Appian Way, he had a vision of Jesus walking the other direction. Peter said, “My Lord, where are you going?” And Jesus replied, “I’m going to Rome to be crucified.” At that, Peter turned around and ran back into the city where he was crucified upside down...with Jesus.

That seems like a lousy plan! And, you see, it isn’t a plan. It’s the way. Peter wanted to be with Jesus at any cost. Love at any cost. God at any cost. That’s faith: love chosen in freedom. And on that faith, the Lord builds His Church. It is His Church.

Communion

And so on that night, which was the beginning of that day, when the earth shook and the sun refused to give light, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body broken for you. Take, eat, and do this in remembrance of me.” And in the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

All things have been arranged (even your failures) that you might see this: God’s free and gracious will, and that His will would become your will. That’s The Plan. In fear we make all sorts of plans. But God has a plan: that we would never fear again, that we would have faith. That’s God’s plan. And God’s plans don’t fail. So don’t worry; be happy! God writes that song. In Jesus’ name, come and worship Him.

Benediction

Put some flesh on that faith. Maybe the Lord is saying to you:

I know what you will do tonight, just as I knew what Peter would do that night. I know every sin you will ever commit. I know every failure you will ever experience. In fact, I knew them the day you were born. I knew them from the foundation of the world. I’m the God of space and time. I know. And I also know that you just came to my table. You listened to the Word, and you believed just a little bit. You ingested a seed. I know the seed seems so small to you, but it’s *me*. And I will do it. I have conquered. I will finish what I started, for this is my will, to make you in my image. This is my plan, and it will not fail. So don’t worry. Be happy. Don’t worry, for worry doesn’t help you get to where you are going. I do. So look at me. You believe.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Don't worry; be happy. In Jesus' name, amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.