

The Way

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[0 : 0 0] So if you come back with me to the upper room to the place where Jesus is speaking with his disciples, there's one less there now, Judas has left and Jesus is now speaking with the disciples who are left.

And he has just spoken of Peter's betrayal of Jesus, or denial of Jesus.

And that leads us into chapter 14, of course. It was all happening at once. There's no chapter divisions in the upper room discourse.

But in many ways, the theme of this evening and the theme of what Jesus is saying here is home. And it's great to get home, isn't it? It's really good to get home.

Maybe some of you are already thinking about getting home and drying out from getting wet coming to church. And I hope the sermon doesn't go on for ages because I want to go home.

[1 : 0 1] And we love the idea of going home. And maybe if you're working people, you enjoy the thought of five o'clock coming so you can get home. Many of our students have finished their first year and are looking forward to some TLC and some good home cooking.

For the next few months. It's a place for us at best, isn't it? Where we can relax, where we experience love and we can be ourselves.

Where we're known and where there's peace. At least that's our dream and that's for many of us, I hope, our experience. But we recognise in that, don't we, that home and all that home represents because it's fundamental to who we are and it's fundamental to what we are and in whose image we've been made.

And as I said briefly, I said it at least in one of the services this morning. So half of the people might have heard it or not. But it's tremendous, I think, the link between what Cori was saying this morning and what I'm going to be saying this evening.

There's a real fusion between the two things and that's always really encouraging. And that benediction that he was speaking about and all that it symbolised is fulfilled in many of the longings we have for home and for peace and for love and for joy.

[2 : 2 8] But because it's so fundamental to our beings and to who we are as people made in the image of God. Obviously, it's also the place where sin can be most exercised and seen and where the evil one himself can do his deepest and most cutting and brutal work.

We know that just in humanity itself, we know it can also be a place of violence, a place of abuse and of fear, a place strangely of isolation and destruction.

And you see that, don't you see that with what's happening, for example, in the highly publicised war in Syria where people, we hear about their fleeing from their homes.

What is loving and secure and where they've made their lives, that's what is, they're ripped from that in war. War takes that from, maybe only some of the older people will have experienced that reality in a physical way through warfare.

But we see that all the time, we see the home being destroyed by illness and ultimately by death, isn't it? What do we say sometimes when someone dies, well there's an empty space in the home?

[3 : 54] Something's missing. Someone is not there anymore who was there before. And of course that only parallels a deeper separation that sin has brought into our lives where we're separated, sin separates us from our heavenly home and from our father and from relationship with him.

So all the brokenness that we experience here is a shadow of the spiritual separation that sin has brought into our lives.

Now the disciples here at this point in their experience were deeply troubled in their own hearts. We know that from the response Jesus speaks to them in verse 1 of this chapter.

They're facing great darkness at this point and we've already looked into that a little bit. They've come to this upper room, they've sensed the spiritual oppression and heaviness and darkness of those who have been opposing them.

You know, the spiritual religious leaders of the day who have made it their policy that they want to kill Jesus. And the disciples knew about that. They recognized that great sense of foreboding and opposition.

[5 : 20] They had put their faith in Jesus Christ. They had given up their homes for Jesus Christ. Remember the disciples said that Jesus, we've given up everything for you. We've given up our homes.

And here they are huddled together in the upper room. The Messiah that they hoped would transform their experience, their lives and their future is speaking about leaving them.

He's saying that he's not going to be with them anymore, that he's got to go away and they can't come to where he's going. And it's like, well Jesus, what are you doing? We've given up everything to follow you and now you're saying it's all going to come to an end.

Is this how it ends? Is this how this great adventure that we've been on for three years is going to end with you talking about someone betraying you? And now you've talked about our leader, Peter, from a human point of view, the leader among the disciples, is it where?

Who's going to deny you three times? There's a deep-seated, troubled spirit that they have. That they have lost everything. That they are going to lose everything.

[6 : 28] That all that's symbolised by a secure home environment and the love and the peace and the grace, all seems to be taken from them. And there's a deep troubling in their spirits, in their hearts.

And it may be for you this evening, if it's not this evening, but it may have been recently, or it will maybe be in the future, that your life isn't inhabited and invaded by trouble, by deep-seated dis-peace, by possibly similar experiences at one level to the disciples, a recognition, a weight of the opposition, the spiritual opposition you sense around you.

You sense in the workplace, you sense maybe sometimes even in the home, or that Jesus, you feel has badly let you down. This isn't the journey that I expected. This isn't the type of Messiah following that has transpired.

It has, you Christ haven't lived up to my expectation. Being a Christian isn't what I thought it was going to be. And you're troubled by that. Right at the very core of your heart. Let down by Him, let down possibly by others, primarily maybe other Christians, which seems to hurt and is a dagger to the soul even more.

Broken life, broken dreams. When you feel that deep-seated trouble in your heart and soul as a believer, what has Christ got to offer? What does Christ offer the disciples here, and what does He offer us in our lives?

[8 : 08] A tremendous, tremendous truth that we would do well to take note of this evening. Because in this passage here, we have the outstanding claims of the Messiah, Jesus, that remain absolutely relevant and significant and important for us in our lives as Christians.

Everything that we believe about Jesus Christ stands or falls in the upper room. The upper room really unfolds and reveals the nature and the character and the work of Jesus Christ.

And we take what He says in the upper room and we apply it in our own lives powerfully. So we're going there for some time this evening, a short time this evening.

Remember what Jesus knows, remember the darkness that He's aware of, far more sensitively even than the disciples or anyone else. Know that He faces darkness and crucifixion, that He Himself is deeply troubled because of what He has to say to Judas and what is shortly to take place. We can only presume He is beginning to taste the three hours of unimaginable, hellish darkness that He will face on the cross.

And here He is, Jesus, in the upper room, in a small place, unnoticed by the world, and He says to His disciples, don't give in to a troubled heart.

[9 : 47] Don't let your hearts be troubled. That's what He says to His disciples here. He's saying, look, this isn't the end game. This isn't what you think, this isn't a dead end.

This isn't the end of what you came to follow me for. There's much, much more to come. Don't let your hearts here be troubled. He's saying, disciples, you're not victims.

You're not defeated here. You're not powerless. You are still with me and you will still be victorious. And I will be, He goes on to say, I will be your burden bearer.

This is fighting talk from Jesus before He goes to the cross. And He's giving strong and assured and confident and powerful words to guys who are just crumbling spiritually.

They're weak and they're impotent and they want to give up their Christian faith. And He says to them, believe in me. He says, believe in God, believe also in me. Trust in God, He says, trust also in me.

[10 : 54] Now, wait a minute. These are first century Jewish men. They were died in the wool Old Testament monotheistic Jews who knew the Shema, that prayer of the Jews, the Lord your God, the Lord your God is one. They knew that.

That was driven into their mind and hearts from the moment they were born. This was the monotheistic religion of God who was one. There was no idols.

There was not a multiplicity of God's and Jesus is saying here, Jesus who may appear to them weak and defeated and about to be betrayed. He says, believe in God, believe also in me.

He's claiming divinity here. He's claiming the right to their faith. He's not saying, just hang on there will be okay. He is claiming divinity.

He's saying, you believe in God, this Old Testament God, believe, trust in me. He is claiming himself to be God and He's saying, look, things are not as they seem.

[12 : 05] You couldn't make this up. You couldn't make this up. He is in this room, around the table with these guys and he's saying, I am the creating sovereign God of the universe and I have come for a purpose and that purpose is being fulfilled. It's not a waste of time.

We aren't at the end. Don't let your hearts be troubled. I am he. And he goes on to say why they shouldn't allow their hearts to be troubled at this point.

And what applies to them applies to us as believers. And it's the great truth about being believers this evening. He says, I am preparing your home. Trust also in me. Believe me.

In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you I go and prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again. I'm preparing your home.

So Jesus is saying, look, it seems like we're at the end of the road. It seems like they were in darkness. He says, but I am on the way to preparing somewhere for you to live. Somewhere real, some eternal home that you can look forward to.

[13 : 17] A home that belongs to the Father, the divine residence. I'm going there and I'm preparing it for you. A place of limitless, we thought of home at the beginning.

The kind of the ideal vision we would have at home multiplied infinitely. He is preparing that for us. A place of security and rest and joy and adventure.

A physical home for us to be in a playground, a dining room, a city of gold, a garden, a place of family love, of belonging and of worship.

I am preparing that for you. And he's reminding them that there is something far greater than what they've experienced. Some trouble that they're going through is going to be overcome because he is taking them through it and preparing a future for them.

And now I'm going to use a word that I've never used in a sermon before and it's just a word personally that I don't like. Sometimes you like a word, sometimes you don't. I don't like this word.

[14 : 26] I don't like the look of it when you see it written and it's come into popular kind of language recently. I don't remember it really being said much before but it works here.

This home he's preparing is bespoke. Everything you go, everything you look now is a bespoke furniture. I never heard of that word until about three years ago. Where did it come from?

But it means something especially prepared individually. And he says here I go and prepare a place for you.

For you. Something that's designed for God's children. Something that is absolutely, completely designed for our fulfilment, for our satisfaction, for our love and belonging and joy.

And that is because God is our Creator. And he knows exactly what will be the most glorious home that we can enjoy. I know I've heard a lot of people saying, I'm not sure if I'm going to enjoy heaven.

[15 : 38] Sounds a bit dull. Sounds a bit kind of eternity and clouds and things. And it seems a bit ethereal and sometimes we spiritualise it to such a degree.

We think of floating around or being disembodied spirits there and all seems a bit weird. But yet this picture that we're given here is one of our Father preparing a place eternally that we will enjoy and we'll find our utter fulfilment in because it is made to our design.

It's made exactly for us. You will absolutely enjoy this home that God is preparing for you. It's prepared with great love and with you and with me in mind.

It's why it has many rooms. Plenty room for everyone who comes to Jesus Christ and it's a place where we will all belong there. There's a programme on the television called Extreme Makeover and the US edition is far better.

What's amazing about that is that they take a worthy family who maybe have a disabled child or who do a lot of work in the community and they really poverty stricken and the house is a mess or whatever and they can't afford anything. And they come in and in a week they blitz that home and they bring the people in afterwards and they take their little child maybe to the bedroom and it's got everything that they need especially for them and it's bespoke.

[17 : 16] It's perfect for them and it's done with love and with compassion and you know when young couples get married they build a home, something that each other wants and you prepare a room for your child or you even prepare a home for an animal because it's an act of love.

Something they will enjoy and receive from. And the reminder is that God, the sovereign God of the universe who is about to face the crucifixion which we'll go on to speak about briefly is at this point saying I'm going to prepare for you a place.

This is why I'm here. This is what I'm doing. This is my act of love and this is what will be the result of coming to face those who wish my death.

I'm preparing a home, it is bespoke, it's for you. And he goes on to say here in the same section that I'm making the way there. I go to prepare a place for you. His going from that upper room is essential to this heaven being made for us.

And we must see that and we must recognise that he here confidently speaks about the future. He's on the threshold of death himself and he's saying look I have a plan and I have a purpose here.

[18 : 41] And the way I am going is going to be the way that will allow you and I to get there. Because he knows that sin and the teaching he's given has been clear that the way to heaven is blocked.

This home which he would prepare can only come through what he is going to do because our way to relationship with Jesus Christ and with our Father is blocked because of sin.

Sin isolates us, sin separates us, sin ultimately leaves us spiritually homeless. Away from God, if you could describe hell, hell would be a place of homelessness, of no belonging, of no fatherhood, of no love, of no security, of no joy.

That is the opposite and that is what we in death deserve as Corrie was speaking of this morning but which Christ came to deal with.

Christ who knew no sin, became sin. He who didn't know that separation, that judgment, that curse became that on our place.

[19 : 58] So for us we need to remember very significantly that the road to the cross is our pathway, is our driveway to heaven.

So Jesus' road to the cross is our driveway to heaven. So God the Son who we worship this evening as a crucified and risen Saviour, that must always be our recognition that our entrance to heaven is through what Jesus Christ has done on our place which we again spoke of so powerfully this morning.

In His rejection, in His despair, in His forsakenness in the cross, in His knowing the wrath of the Father, in His knowing the opposition and the bearing of our trouble, He is the one who senses the Father's displeasure against sin, who pays the price and on the cross who says it's finished.

You know I hope before too long someone up there, I don't mean in heaven, I mean upstairs, a builder is going to say it is finished. And that will be good, you know it will be finished and we can get back in there and the work will be done.

I'm tired of this place looking like a bomb site. And yet Jesus on the cross says it is finished, the pathway has been laid, the work has been done, I have sensed the Father's displeasure on your behalf and I have paid the price.

[21 : 39] And of course what is significant there at that point is the curtain of the Holy of Holies is ripped into from top to bottom to signify the way to the Father being opened, the way to heaven being opened.

It is finished. The cross is our driveway to heaven and the way to Jesus Christ and the Father is opened. So the cross and the crucifixion is indeed as we saw last week is the glorification of Christ.

It is His greatest glory that He is our Redeemer. We can add nothing to that, we can offer nothing to Him, His salvation for us is a gift and it is a way that opens up heaven for us.

His death on the cross this evening is what we rejoice in that gives us eternal life. So the cross is in making the way for us to go home.

And then He goes on to say, and if I go there I will come back for you.

[22 : 58] I will come back for you. If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and I will take you to myself that where I am you may be also.

I will come back for you. And that probably is a promise of a thousand love stories, isn't it? I will come back for you.

I will be back one day, the lovers who are separated and one of them says I will be back for you. And the Christian and us this evening can know that in the troubles that we face we are not alone.

Now commentators speak a lot about what this means, about what Jesus is saying coming back for you means. And I think it can have different emphasis.

He didn't leave His believers, His followers, His orphans. He said I will send my Holy Spirit. So He comes back to us in the form of His Spirit in our lives and our hearts. He doesn't leave us alone.

[23 : 59] So we have His presence with us in that way. When you die, when I die, Jesus is coming back for us. He's coming to take us home and He will come for us in that day is the great, the one who calls us to be with Himself.

But I think the primary reference here clearly is to His second coming, that He will come back to His people. He has come back once in humiliation, He will return in glory.

He will return so that every eye will see Him and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And He came invisibly as it were, He will come and it will be known and seen by all.

And He's reminding us again that things are not as they seem and that the trouble that burdens us so much is not the last word for us. He's saying, look, I'm coming back for you, I've already come back for you in the person of the Spirit.

I've come back for every believer thus far and taking them home and I will return. He's saying, you're in my mind, you're in my heart, you're in my plans. You have a great present and you have a great future because of who I am.

[25 : 12] And we think too little of that. We think too little of Christ's return, of Christ's presence, of Christ's preparation and the future that He has for us.

And Cody mentioned this morning about how many of the promises in the Old Testament spoke about the land. And that's very significant because we have mystified heaven and we have spiritualized heaven to such a degree that we've forgotten that promise.

We've forgotten the reality of Christ when He returns will bring complete renewal, not just to body and soul, not just physical and spiritual, but to the universe of which we live so that He will, as we've seen, as the whole point of Ephesians, that He will create a new heavens and a new earth within dwells righteousness.

So it will be a great physical land mass that is also a spiritual reality for us, a great place, that He's coming back for us to be there in the trouble that you face, in the difficulties you face.

Remember that. I say one last thing and it's related to this, I hope, entirely. He says not only is he preparing a home that it's bespoke, that he is making the way for us to get there, that he's going to come back for us, but he goes further and this is where it links so well with what we've been saying in the last number of weeks, in Ephesians, he says, I am the way. You know, Thomas says, Lord, we don't know where you're going, how can we know the way?

[26 : 43] Jesus says, I am the way, the truth in the life, no one comes to the Father except through me. As if his earlier claim to trust in him as you trust in God wasn't bold enough, he now says that there is no utterly exclusive. You want to near evangelism to be strong and to be confident, then point people to this phrase and say that this is Jesus' claim.

When people say, how do you know there's not lots of different ways to heaven? How do you know your way is right? How do you know it's not just because of the home you were brought up in? He says, it's got nothing to do with me, but this is the claim of Jesus. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father, no one comes home, no one knows heaven, no one knows a future, no one knows eternal life, unless it is through Jesus Christ. So Jesus is saying, I'm not just preparing a way, I'm not just making the way through the cross, he's not just leading the way or showing us the way, he is the way.

Okay? Jesus Christ is the way because he is the truth and because he is the life. So he himself is the way. And that's very significant, because in your trouble, in your brokenheartedness, in the depth of doubt and struggle and battle and fear that you face, the answer will be, and will always be, Jesus. It can be nothing else, and I can't say anything new, or miraculous or mysterious or different to that.

But the simple answer for you as a Christian, when you're struggling, when you want to give up, when you want to move away, when you want to do something different, is that Jesus Christ is the answer.

[28 : 28] He is himself the way. And he's saying to Thomas, you know the way where I'm going. Thomas doesn't understand. But Jesus is saying, Thomas, you do know the way because I am the way, and you know me.

And that's really significant and powerful for us, because in a sense we don't know the way, or Thomas didn't know the way, but he did. And very often we think, well, I don't know how to come through this, and I don't know how to be a deeper and more meaningful and spiritual Christian.

You do, actually. It's Jesus. It's by going back to Jesus. There's no secret key. There's no secret knowledge beyond that, that Jesus himself is the answer.

And we are made at the core of our being for Jesus Christ. And we saw that already today. We're made for worship. We're made for relationship. We're made for being home.

Home with Him. And sin destroys that. But our sin was crucified with Him on the cross. And as we deny the remaining sin in our hearts, we fall towards Jesus Christ and His grace.

[29 : 46] And so the practical application of this is make Him your home. Make Jesus Christ your home. That's what he's saying here.

Now, I missed a trick a couple of weeks ago, the last week, a couple of weeks ago, when we were doing the Armour of God. And Ephesians last week it was, I think. Went through the Armour of God. Went through the different pieces of the Armour.

And we applied that truth and what it meant. And it wasn't until I got home, it wasn't until I was in bed, that I thought, you know, I absolutely missed the point.

What I should have said in wearing that, we talk about wearing the Armour of God, what are we doing? It's in the same way. We are wearing Christ. Christ is the fulfillment of all that Armour.

And when you wonder, Spirit, how would you mean by putting on the Armour of God? It means that we are in a relationship with Christ. And this is the same here. He says, it was a way to heaven. Well, it's Christ Himself. It's relationship with Christ now that is the way to heaven.

[30 : 57] And so in Christ, what we're beginning to experience actually is heaven now. Christ in our relationship with us now is the beginning of heaven that we will experience in fullness.

So that closer we are to Christ, the more grace filled life we will enjoy and the more heavenly it will become, even in the midst of battle. Make Him your home.

And what does that mean? Well, it means you need to spend time with Him. You buy a house, you decorate that house and then you live in the shed.

It's not your home. A home is only a home when you live in it, when you make it your own, but it becomes familiar to you. You know, we say that all the time and it's very practical, isn't it?

It's only as you make time to be there that it becomes our home and so Christ is the same. Make Him exclusive in your life. Make time for Him.

[31 : 59] Mold your hearts so that you spend time with Him. Make Him a priority. Take to Him your burdens. Take to Him your doubts. Your trouble. He is born our trouble.

He says, don't carry that trouble of doubt and fear and failure and guilt and depression. Take it to Him. Take it to Him. Let Him hold you.

You know, we saw the previous week that He Himself was deeply troubled in heart because He is our trouble bearer. He's taking that. He is taking our burdens and He says, don't let your hearts be troubled, but take them to Him.

Stop gossiping about your failed Christianity to others. Stop gossiping about the weakness of Jesus to others.

Speak to Him. Take your troubles to Him, your failure and all that goes with that. And know the fullness of His presence and of His company.

[33 : 07] In Christ, we are genuinely coming home in relationship and we are tasting only beginning to, but we are beginning to taste the victory and the hope and the future and the perfection that is in Him.

He's a great saviour, a wonderful, glorious saviour. We read from Isaiah 46 and someone emailed me this week and said they wanted to know how He was getting on and how things were progressing spiritually, knowing some of the battles of work and family issues with Katrina and not having been well and various things. It's another minister in the city.

And he said, I was praying for you and I want to give you these verses. I don't know what he was saying about what he thinks about me and you'll know what I mean when we get to it, but they were very powerful words and very meaningful words which we read already.

Listen, O House of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel who have been born by me from before your birth, carried from the womb even to your old age.

I am he and to gray hairs I will carry you. I will be carried and I will bear. I will carry and I will save.

[34 : 42] And he's going to carry us and he'll carry us home in relationship with Him. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Jesus.

Let's pray. Father God we ask and pray that you would help us even in our old age and gray hairs and maybe especially in that to put our trust in you.

How easy it is for us to as we go on in our Christian lives become more self-reliant, more independent, more cynical, further from you.

May that not be the case. May we be like Caleb who even when he was 85 years old just felt as vigorous and as strong for the kingdom of God as he did when he was young.

May we be like that and may we be like that because you are the way, the truth in the life. And may our energy and our spiritual dynamism and our ability to overcome trouble and our miraculous faith in you may that grow because of what you have achieved for us.

[35 : 53] For the burden that you have taken, for the guilt that you have paid the price for, for the glorious future that you are preparing even tonight as we live our Christian lives.

Let's not live Lord God as if this is all there is and as if the troubles of this life are just so great that we can't see Jesus or see heaven. But may we look forward to our home and may we seek to share that gospel of peace in a world of dis-peace, of brokenness, of broken hearts and broken homes.

And may we go with Jesus Christ and the hope of the gospel to all our neighbours, all who we are in contact with. For Jesus' sake we pray, amen.