

Why Are You Troubled?

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[0 : 00] Why are you troubled? Why are you troubled? That's the question that Jesus asked his disciples in a small room the evening after he had risen from the dead.

Why are you troubled? I wonder what your answer would be this morning if he asked you that question. Why are you troubled? Wow, Jesus, where do I start? About bills, rising petrol prices, insecurity about my future, terrorism, load shedding, broken relationships, sickness that I'm suffering with, crime in our country that never seems to decrease.

You know, we are living in a world that's full of troubles, aren't we? And we're more troubled today than ever before. In fact, recent studies have shown that rates of clinical anxiety today are 20 times what they were in 1980.

We're stressed, we're anxious, we're troubled. I think that is true for each one of us. And that's why this passage that records that night in that room with Jesus' disciples, why this passage is so relevant to us today, because it's here in light of his resurrection from the dead that Jesus gives his disciples a cure for all of their troubles, an antidote for anxiety and trouble.

By showing them three things that literally transform them from the beginning of this encounter to the end, these disciples are different men, because from the beginning to the end of this encounter, it transforms them from fear to boldness, from anxiety to joy, because of three simple things that Jesus tells them.

[1 : 45] Three things that he wants all of his disciples to know back then and today. Three things that his resurrection has achieved for you if you are a follower of Christ. Three things that free you from anxiety so that you can live the life that Jesus has called you to.

And I want us to see what they are this morning. And so the first thing Jesus tells his disciples and tells us is he tells us about new life. Tells us about new life.

Notice the first thing that he does in verse 38. He says to them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet.

It is I myself. Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. Okay, so why did he do that?

Why did he show them his hands and feet? Well, the first and the most immediate reason that his disciples were troubled, okay, just put yourself in their situation for a moment.

[2 : 48] The first reason that they were troubled is that they had just seen three days ago, they had just seen Jesus being killed, crucified on the cross, and he was standing right in front of them alive and well.

I mean, that's enough to freak anyone out, isn't it? I would be troubled. I'm surprised they didn't faint out of shock. And not to mention that he had just appeared there.

Out of nowhere, the doors were closed, and he was just there amongst them. And so they were troubled. They were scared. And so he shows them, the first thing he does is he shows them that he's not a ghost.

Because that would have been their initial conclusion. If you see someone who's just died standing in front of you, that's what you would assume. And so Jesus makes it clear that he's not a ghost, that the man standing in front of them is the same man who was crucified on the cross.

He's real. He shows them his scars. And that they could touch him. They could see the nail marks in his hands. They could touch it. They could make sure that he was real, that he wasn't a ghost.

[3 : 48] It's quite a bizarre scene. Just picture it. You know, Jesus standing there, and these 12 men gathered around him, kind of poking him with these eyes as wide as saucers to make sure that he's real. But even then, after he proves it to them, even then we see that they still can't believe it.

Verse 41, they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement. Literally, this was too good to be true. It was too good to be true. And so he proves it again by eating a piece of fish in front of them just to show that he's real.

Again, you can imagine the scene. Jesus kind of taking this piece of fish. These 12 men gathered around him, staring at him, and him eating away. I mean, talk about being self-conscious when you're eating. But the reason, you see, the reason they were so amazed, the reason his disciples couldn't come to terms with this that was in front of them is because it was the last thing they were expecting.

We must never forget that the disciples were not expecting Jesus to rise from the dead, irrespective of the fact that he had told them time and time again that he was going to. They still didn't expect it. You see, and the reason is because they never quite realized what he meant when he said he was going to rise from the dead. They didn't realize that he meant he was actually going to physically rise from the dead.

[5 : 00] Jewish religion was not too clear on what happened after death. There was some kind of afterlife they believed in, they knew about, but it was never clear what this afterlife consisted of. And so when Jesus told them time and time again that he was going to rise from the dead, they probably thought that he was talking about some kind of spiritual afterlife up in the clouds that he's going to rise there.

But it's here that Jesus really, for the first time in history, reveals what actually is going to happen to God's people after they die. The result of him dying on the cross to take our sins away is not that we go to some ethereal spiritual afterlife, as people tend to think, but it's real new life, physical life, tangible life, a physical resurrection with a new body that is as real as this one but better.

A body that doesn't get sore, that doesn't get sick, that doesn't die. You see, Jesus, by standing there physically in front of his disciples, he's giving them and giving us a window into what's to come for the people that he died for.

A restored, perfected world with restored, perfected bodies that God has always intended for us. You see, and now Jesus' death, he shows, has made that possible.

And Jesus' resurrection proves that it's real. It's not just some wishful thinking. But I don't think we really believe that most of the time. You know, I think we are often like the disciples.

[6 : 27] And we often don't think about the life to come as being quite as real as this one. And you know why I think that?

I think that because of how much, even as Christians, we tend to focus on this life and not the life to come, don't we? We focus on the here and now. We focus on enjoying this life, making sure that we get the best out of these few years on earth, making sure that we make the most of the here and now.

We work ourselves crazy to build the best life for us here and now, to be comfortable, to be safe, to be happy, to go on nice holidays and to get the best retirement. But, of course, ironically, in our anxiety to do all that, we end up stressing ourselves out and never get to enjoy any of it.

Well, Jesus comes to us and says, this is not it. Don't worry so much about this life because it's only a shadow of the real life to come.

That is now a certainty for those who are in Christ. You know, this body that we try so hard to keep in tip-top shape, this body is only a shadow of the body that God has waiting for you.

[7 : 37] Sunsets and beaches and exotic locations that we want to go on holidays to, there's nothing wrong with enjoying those now, but we must realize they are only poor shadows of the real thing that's waiting for us in the new creation, waiting for God's people.

If you're a disciple of Christ, if you put your faith in Jesus and his death on the cross, he wants you to have certainty of what he's achieved for you, to free you from the slavery of concentrating on the here and now.

And to give you peace so that you can make sacrifices for him here and now, that you can endure hardships for him here and now, because you know this is not it. And so it frees you up, you see. And that's the first thing that Jesus showed his disciples as an antidote to their troubles. New life. The new life to come. And then the second thing he showed them is new purpose.

He gave them literally new purpose. Have a look from verse 44. He said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.

[8 : 49] Then he opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures. Okay, let's just pause there. We've got to understand what Jesus is doing here and why he's doing it. You see, he's showing his disciples that all of the scriptures in their Bible, which is our Old Testament today, all of the prophets, all of the laws, all of the poetry, everything, was actually talking about him.

All of that, thousands of years before, was all pointing to Jesus. And we're told he opened their minds so that they could understand those scriptures.

For the first time, the scriptures they've been brought up hearing every Sabbath in the synagogue, for the first time, these disciples are seeing their real meaning. They suddenly make sense. To illustrate, I don't know if you've ever seen a video of a guy called D. Westry.

He's a speed painter. All right, I don't know if you know what a speed painter is, but he appeared on some talent show, a few talent shows, in fact, and his talent was to paint a picture in a minute and a half.

So his job was a speed painter. And so he was on this talent show, and they started the clock, and off he goes, and he gets painting, and the clock's counting down, and people are looking, and they're saying, what on earth is he painting?

[10 : 00] Is it some kind of pair? They're looking, and they're these judges that judge the talent show, and they're looking, and they're wondering, okay, he might be painting fast, but we don't know what he's painting at all. And then time runs out, and he sheepishly stands back and shows his bizarre painting, and there's a few claps in the audience just for courtesy.

They don't know what he painted, but then all of a sudden he flips it over, and it shows the detailed portrait of a man's face. And of course the crowd goes wild. You see, he had painted this portrait in 90 seconds upside down, and they didn't know what it was until he flipped it over and revealed it to them.

And that's kind of like what Jesus is doing with the Bible. To his disciples. You see, you read the Old Testament, and it seems often quite bizarre and quite irrelevant until you flip it over in light of Jesus, and suddenly it all makes sense.

It's then that you see that the Old Testament paints an incredible picture of who God is and what his plans have been from the beginning of time that he's been building up towards Christ, right from the beginning of time.

And it's here for the first time that Jesus' disciples see that. They see the big picture. They see what it's all about. They see God's plan that he's been putting into place from the beginning of creation.

[11 : 20] They realize for the first time why he had to die on Friday. They realize that thousands of years of prophecies have been looking forward to this moment in history. They realize that the cross is the center of God's plans for the world.

But then Jesus doesn't stop there. He then goes on to show them where they fit into God's big picture, God's big plans for the world, what God's plan is from this moment onwards.

So we see that in verse 47. And that is that repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

That's what he tells his disciples. And they must have been going, wow, wow. They've just been shown, just again, put yourself in their shoes. They've just been shown thousands of years worth of history all come together in the events of the last few days and that they're in the middle of it all.

Imagine what they would have been thinking. Now why? Why does Jesus show them all this? Well, you see, it's because he wants them to orient their lives around what God is doing in the world.

[12 : 30] He wants them to start living their lives in terms of the big picture, in terms of God's plans and what he's doing right now. He wants them to see the big picture and their role in it so that they stop stumbling around uncertain and anxious in life and they know where they're going.

That's what he wanted of his disciples. He wanted to orient them. That word orient is a very interesting word. I looked it up. It refers to the East. We talk about Oriental food or the Orient Express or whatever.

But we also use that word to describe getting our bearings, don't we? We orient ourselves. Why is that? Why do we use the word like that? Well, it's because back in the day, people traveling every morning used to orient themselves to the sunrise in the East.

And that's why we call the East the Orient because that's how people used to orient themselves in the ships and as they were traveling. And they did that. They oriented themselves so that they could be confident of where they're going and not bumble around heading the wrong way so that they

could head in a particular direction.

And you see, Jesus wants that for his disciples and he wants that for you and me. He wants us to orient ourselves to what God is doing, to get on board, and to start doing what we're here to do.

[13 : 45] And so what are we here to do? Well, Jesus tells us, he tells his disciples in verse 48, you are to be witnesses of these things. Jesus is saying to his disciples, that is your mission, that is your purpose from here on out for the rest of your lives.

Until God calls you home, you are to be witnesses of what God is doing in this world as I've just revealed to you. And when God calls us to be witnesses, that is what he means as Christians. It means to testify to what God is doing in this world, to show people, to show the world what God is doing as he's revealed it to us in Scripture. And that doesn't mean being some cheap salesman trying to convince people to be Christians.

No, it means showing in how we live our lives and in how we speak, showing the reality of what God has revealed to be true. Because we're living in light of the big picture and people can see that. It means orienting ourselves every day to what God is doing. So we don't bumble around, living pointless lives. You know, you can't be an effective witness and fulfill your purpose as a Christian if you don't orient yourself every day, if you don't live in light of the big picture.

[15 : 02] So how do you do that? How do you orient yourself? Well, how did the disciples get oriented to their purpose? We see in verse 45, Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

You see, the Scriptures, the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments, show us God's big picture. And so unless we are in the Scriptures, reading Scriptures, drinking from Scriptures, absorbing Scriptures, meeting together in Bible studies to unpack the Scriptures, if you're not doing that, then you'll just be bumbling around life, wasting your time.

You see, it says, God reveals Himself to us in Scriptures that we see the big picture every day and we live in light of it. And then we can live out our days on earth with purpose. Don't you want to do that?

Because that is what Jesus is calling us to do. That's what Jesus wants for His disciples and that's what He wants for you, a life lived with purpose, orienting yourselves around God's big plans that are taking place in this world right now.

And so new life, He gives us new purpose. And then finally, He shows us, thirdly, He shows us new power. Now, I don't want you to get the impression that Jesus came to make our lives comfortable and to take all our troubles away because that's certainly not the case.

[16 : 21] And if you've been a Christian for any length of time, you'll know that's not the case. You see, when Jesus comes to bring His disciples peace, notice that He doesn't do that by taking them away from trouble.

He could have. He could have taken His disciples away. He could have taken them home, but He didn't. He left them here in this troubled world. And so you see, He doesn't take His disciples out of trouble.

He doesn't take us out of trouble when we follow Him. However, what we learn here is that He does give us an incredible resource to handle our troubles, to live our new life, and to carry out our new purpose that He's given us in this world.

And so Jesus doesn't leave His disciples to fend for themselves. Look what He says in verse 49. I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

And so Jesus here is referring to the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the life giver who hovered over the waters of creation, who spoke in history through the prophets, who has throughout time been God's executive agent on earth.

[17 : 33] Through the Holy Spirit, God's people have been comforted and counseled and guided and helped and strengthened and supported. That's the role of the Holy Spirit in this world. And Jesus is telling His disciples, the Holy Spirit is going to come to you like never before.

But He says, wait for Him to His disciples. He says to His disciples, don't even try, go out and be my witnesses and fulfill your purpose without Him.

Because the task I'm giving you, you can't do it in your own strength. That's essentially what He's saying to His disciples. That's why He tells them to wait until the Holy Spirit comes down.

And that's exactly what happened. Not long afterwards, the Holy Spirit came. We read about it in Acts chapter 2 at Pentecost in Jerusalem. And it was then when the Holy Spirit came down and manifested Himself in flames of fire, it was then that the disciples were empowered for their purpose as witnesses.

And from that moment, they went out and did that amazingly, confidently, joyfully, because they weren't doing it in their own strength. But you see, that's why the disciples could do what they were doing, because they weren't doing it in their power.

[18 : 44] You see, this new power that Jesus gave them in the Holy Spirit freed them from the anxiety of self-reliance. It gave them peace, not by taking them away from trouble, but it gave them peace from the stress of living life in their own strength.

And here's the thing. God gives that same powerful spirit to all of His people when they put their faith in Christ and when they follow Him. If you are a Christian, that same spirit works in you, the Bible says, to change your desires to God's desires, to work on you, to change your life, to open your mind to understand God's Word as Jesus did here with His disciples, to transform you into the image of Christ, to make you aware of God's work in the world, to open your eyes, to let you see, to enable you to be a witness of that.

But in other words, God gives you His Spirit to do all the things that He's called you to do. God does not call you to do something and then not give you the strength and the power to do it.

But that means that He doesn't expect you to do it in your own strength. In fact, He doesn't want you to do it in your own strength. Jesus didn't want His disciples to go out and fulfill their mission in their own strength.

And if only we would believe that. because we're so self-reliant, aren't we? It's in our nature to be self-reliant. It's a characteristic of our culture as well.

[20 : 11] We pride ourselves in being able to handle whatever life throws at us, be strong and be independent. That's kind of the hero figure of our culture, the independent man or woman.

And that's the attitude that we all strive after, to be able to have the strength to be self-reliant and independent. But the problem is when that attitude comes out in following Christ.

See, we instinctively think that we're able to do what Jesus called us to do when we're not in our own strength. Kind of like Peter. Remember Peter? Just before Jesus died, He said to Peter, you're all going to fall away.

He said, no, no, Jesus, I'll never fall away. I'll stick with you. I'll follow you till the end. I'll die with you. And then, not long afterwards, He denied Jesus three times in a row. He couldn't do what He knew He should.

He thought He was able to do what it takes to follow Jesus. And we think the same thing. We've got that same self-reliance in our hearts. And you know how I know that?

[21 : 17] It's because we pray so little. We all know that we should be praying more, don't we? As Christians. But why aren't we? Well, it's because we don't really think we need to. It's because we think we can handle life okay without any help.

See, if we did think that we needed God more than we know, then we would pray without ceasing, whether or not it was convenient. But we don't. The busier we get, what's the first thing that drops away?

Prayer. Time spent with God. Time spent relying on Him. It should be the last thing that drops away the busier we get. We should actually be like Martin Luther, the German reformer.

He got it right. He said, I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours of my day in prayer. See, the busier he got, the more he prayed.

Martin Luther was a person who wasn't dependent on himself, but he was dependent on God. And look what God did through him because he didn't rely on his own strength. If only we could do that.

[22 : 16] If only we could let go of our self-reliance and depend on God's Spirit to work in us and through us like Martin Luther did, like the disciples did, like all the great men and women of faith did, imagine what God could do through us at St. Mark's.

Imagine what God could do through you as a disciple of him if you're relying fully on his Spirit that he gives you. And so we're told in Scripture, do not quench the Spirit of God.

But we do, don't we? We quench the Spirit of God every time we think we can do things in our own strength. We're not relying on God's Spirit. We stop him from working in our lives.

Every time we fail to pray because we don't think we need to, we quench the Spirit of God. We stop God's power from working in our lives. Rather, God tells us that we must keep in step with the Spirit.

And we do that. You know how we keep in step with the Spirit? We do that as we open the Word, as we read God's amazing Word through which the Holy Spirit enlightens us and opens our eyes and guides us.

[23 : 16] If we keep the Bible closed and on our shelves, God's power will never work in our lives. But it's as we open the Bible and read it and study it and come to Bible study and come to church and talk about the Word and read it with people, it's then that we get on board with what God is doing.

You see, because the Word gives us God's big picture. It orients us. And it's then that we pray that God would enable us to do His work. And when we do that, that's when God's Spirit works.

That's when God's power will be shown in our lives. And you know what will happen then? You know what will happen for you? Well, you'll stop stressing. You'll stop being in such a panic day after day and you'll experience the peace that Jesus wants you to experience that is available to you.

You've just got to stop relying on yourself. Listen to Philippians chapter 4. It says, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

That is available to you. God's peace. Jesus rose. He died and He rose to give you that peace. peace. And He says to His disciples, Peace be with you.

[24 : 42] He says that to you if you are His disciple. This morning as He rose from the dead, He says to you, Peace be with you. And if you're not, if you're not following Jesus and you know you're not, if Jesus is not your Lord and Savior, then you're probably not at peace and you know it.

Turn to Jesus. Decide to follow Him because He is the only way that you'll ever find true peace. A peace that comes from knowing where you are going in eternity because He's paid for your sins and knowing what you're doing on earth here in the meantime until God takes you home.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you and we praise you for not leaving us to fend for ourselves.

Help us through your Spirit to know the reality of our new life to come.

Lord, would that life to come be as real to us as this life that's passing away? Cause us, Lord, to be witnesses of what you've done to make that new life possible.

And Lord, help us never to rely on our own strength anymore. Help us not to quench the Spirit that you've given us but help us to keep in step with Him every day of our lives.

[26 : 04] And we pray this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.