

The Antidote to Worry - Kevin Miller, 30 minutes, **John 14:1-14** (#498)

Introduction: One thing that is undeniable about humans is that we are worriers. We worry about what people think of us, about the future, about how we will get through life. We worry about troubling things like wars and – ironically – we worry about wonderful things, such as love. This side of the fall, worry is a sadly common part of our lives.

But what should shock us more – if we know our Bibles – is how often Christ’s followers are taught not to fear, not to worry; yet, we Christians seem to worry about life no less than our secular friends and neighbors. We worry about what elections will mean, we worry about how the economy will affect our children, we fear what a future will look like on this sinful world.

So, given that we know what the Scriptures say: do not be afraid; do not worry about tomorrow; it would be easy to feel condemned. To come away from passages like we’ll read in **John 14** thinking that, if you worry, you have somehow failed the Lord and failed at faith which – sadly – brings on yet more worry. But that is not our goal this morning, nor is that what Jesus intends for the disciples who first heard these words. Instead, His teaching is aimed at giving them a sure-footed confidence in the Lord. The antidote to worry is not more guilt, neither is it empty flowery words, but rather it is to trust the One who knows all things. What does that look like? Let’s see at the start of **John 14**...

14:1-4 Remember the context: **chapter 13** gave us a stunning picture of Christian service when Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, and then it concluded with another stunning picture of love and of betrayal with Christ’s teachings and Judas’ plotting. Now, Judas has left. Peter has been told that he will deny Jesus at a coming time. Can you feel the disciples’ unease? What hope, what love, that our Lord’s next words are not “what’s wrong with you people? Buck up! Try harder!” but instead, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Mark that: difficult times are coming, they were – even at that point – on the horizon, yet Christ’s words are

hope filled. Not quite what we would expect. I suspect some of us might even say that such times are precisely when it's ok to worry. But that's not what Jesus says.

In these verses, Jesus gives us the antidote to worry. It isn't hard; you don't have to know Greek and Hebrew or be some great theologian to understand it. Frankly, many of the most hopeful things in the Scriptures – from the Gospel on – aren't difficult to understand, though they are difficult to believe. They require faith. So it is here. Christ's three-fold antidote to worry is to believe, to trust, and to know.

Christ's disciples are to believe in Him. Jesus has told the disciples the plan, though they don't like it. They've been thrown for a loop with His ideas of being a servant and loving those who hate them. Yet we have a benefit they did not – we are on this side of the cross, we know how everything turned out. And it turned out exactly as Jesus said that it would. That should give you and I a lot of fuel, a lot of drive, for believing what Jesus has said. Are you afraid of the government? Of Coronavirus? Of the future? Then be reassured: there may be hardships and trials of many kinds here on earth, but the Lord has not abandoned you, nor has He forsaken you. In fact, Jesus has gone to prepare a place for you. Believe Him.

Second: trust in Christ's plans. In **verse 2** we read of them: Jesus has gone to prepare a place – a place to be with Him, our eternal home. One which cannot be shaken or taken, which cannot be destroyed or locked away. And if Jesus spends so much time and effort preparing this place for His people, then that should only show us all the more how serious He is about returning to bring us there.

Third: we know what to believe. We see this not only in **verse 4**, but all throughout the Scriptures. God does not keep us in the dark about anything necessary for faith or salvation. Have you ever realized that? It means that the questions which remain, most of what you and I really struggle with, is actually unnecessary. Don't misunderstand, my point isn't that questions are bad, and it's not that we shouldn't ask them. Instead, what I'm saying is that this is good news: you don't have to have unanswered questions about how to be saved, about how

to trust Jesus, about how He loves you. You and I have all the reassurance we could ever need – and more – in the Scriptures. And that’s a comforting thought.

Believe in Jesus, trust in His work, and know what He has said. Putting these three into practice doesn’t mean that you’ll never have worries and concerns – you and I are imperfect sinners, after all – but it will sever the root of worry. It will disarm the stranglehold and franticness that fear so often has over us as Christians.

Now, perhaps you are thinking this is all a bit pie in the sky – easy to say, hard to do. Or not very realistic. You have questions about this solution, concerns that aren’t addressed. If so, I want you to see what comes next – Thomas and Philip had questions and concerns as well. Let’s start with Thomas...

14:5-7 Thomas has listened to what Jesus has been saying, but he’s a bit more of the literal sort. He wants details, he wants explanations. Sure, Jesus has done a lot of teaching, but Thomas doesn’t have a nice, orderly, notebook filled with bullet points about how to “go where Jesus is going.” So he asks, he questions, and Jesus – graciously – answers...

As with so many of Christ’s answers, it isn’t quite what Thomas would have expected, but it is exactly what Thomas – and every disciple, including you and I – needs. The way to follow after Jesus? It’s again simple, but not easy: we follow after Jesus by following Jesus Himself. How? By believing in Him. Think on that for a moment: you and I aren’t saved on the strength of our own faith, by how much we know. No, we are saved by Jesus. His strength is what matters, not ours. So, what is the way? It is to follow Jesus. What is the truth? All that Christ has said and done and is. What is the life? The very thing that Jesus provides through His own life, death, and resurrection. This is nothing less than a call to be a disciple.

But, you or I might think: “wasn’t Thomas already a disciple? Is Jesus somehow saying that his lack of understanding means he didn’t have faith? Or that something was wrong with him?” Yes, Thomas was already a disciple. And you’ll notice that Jesus doesn’t say any of those things that you and I are tempted to

worry about. Instead, He simply says that the way to the Father is through Jesus. Everyone who knows Him knows the Father. And rather than chastising Thomas, instead Jesus says: “From now on you do know him and have seen him.” How? Because Thomas has seen and known and followed Jesus.

Some of you listening to these words are the sort of folks who have many questions. You have gone through life looking for answers to all kinds of things, and that’s not bad or wrong. The Lord has given you an inquisitive mind – you want to know, to find out, to understand. The danger is if you let this go too far, always questioning and never believing. Focus your questions and your knowing on what God has revealed, not what He hasn’t. You’ll find a lot less to worry about that way, and your picture of Jesus will grow larger and deeper as a result.

But for others of you, the concerns of Thomas aren’t your concerns. Perhaps they are more like Philip’s?

14:8-11 Philip hears what Jesus is saying to Thomas, but his question is a bit different. If Thomas’ struggle was that he wanted all the details spelled out, it seems like Philip’s struggle is that he wants something other than what Jesus has already provided. So he says “show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” That might seem like a perfectly legitimate question, until you realize that it directly contradicts what Jesus just said: He said that those who know Him, know the Father. Those who have seen Jesus, have seen the Father. Did Philip somehow miss that last sentence? I don’t think so.

Instead, with Philip we see the other side of the coin – the desire that many of us have for God to do something, to reveal Himself, in ways that He hasn’t chosen to. This sometimes comes in the form of what we desire: “if only God would do a miracle, then this person would believe...” But what that person needs isn’t anything different than what the Lord has already provided in His Word. Or we think: “why couldn’t the Lord have made things plainer, easier, simpler? Surely there’s got to be a Cliff’s Notes version of the Bible somewhere?” But what He inspired – and the way He inspired it – is precisely what we need. Our main issue

isn't that the Bible is too hard to understand, it's that we don't want to put in the effort to understand it. We give up far too easily when we come to passages that confuse us. Similarly, passages that seem plain and straightforward, we tend to think can't really be that simple. Our biggest problem in understanding, interpreting, and applying the Bible isn't that it's a translation or that it comes from an ancient culture, or that God has made it too difficult. No, the biggest problem is us, it's ourselves. So it is here with Philip. Which is why Jesus responds as He does. And note how Jesus' challenge to Philip dovetails with what He said at the start of the chapter – He doesn't give in to Philip's request, but instead calls him to believe in Christ all the more.

Perhaps, at this point, rather than being encouraged you actually feel more beaten down than ever. You shouldn't. Jesus did not condemn the questions of Thomas or Philip and neither does He condemn your own questions, your own places where faith is weak. Instead, let's conclude with what He says in these next three verses...

14:12-14 Jesus knows what we need: our belief needs to be more than our thoughts. So He calls Thomas and Philip and all the disciples to do something with their belief: to act on it. To do the works that He does, which is what every Christian is called to. Which brings us to our conclusion: Jesus offers one solid step that all of us can take this week. When He says "If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it," Jesus is referring to prayer. We are to pray. I can testify from personal experience that when I am slow to pray, I am more prone to worry. But when I am quick to pray – and when I keep praying in the midst of my worry – those are the times when He may or may not give me the answer I seek, but most assuredly He strengthens my faith and lessens my worry.

Asking "anything" in Christ's name doesn't mean asking for things that are contrary to His will or outside of the context. When we pray asking Him to help us be disciples, that's when we are assured of His response. Pray to grow. Pray to trust. Pray to have hope. Pray to serve others. Pray to give Him glory. This is how we follow Jesus out of worry and into faithfulness. Let's make a start of it right now...