

Fifth Sunday of Easter

OUR "T's" GET CROSSED

John 14.1-14

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Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." ⁸Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever

you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

DIAGNOSIS: THE TERRIBLE “T’S”

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Trouble with a Capital “T”*

Jesus became distressed, agitated, and deeply grieved, even to death, when he faced his coming suffering and death. In other words, he was troubled. So it is odd that he tells us not to let our hearts be troubled. We are troubled by a husband’s sore throat that yesterday was diagnosed as cancer of the larynx. We are troubled by a thirteen year old, who is verbally abusive to his mother because his father (now divorced from his mother) was extremely verbally abusive. Jesus is about to leave (first in death, then ascension), and the same powers that crucify him are the powers that will distress, agitate, and deeply grieve his disciples, even to death. Other powers also trouble us (throat cancer and verbal abuse), even to death, making us feel life is burdensome and mean. There are ways to treat cancer; there are therapists who help families work through the consequences of abuse. We use those treatments and therapists, and cope with life one day at a time. But add God to the situation and we think there cannot be a God who cares. If God cared, God would make good things happen. Since bad things happened, there can be no God who cares. We say, “Is there a God? Show me. Then I will say there is a God. But don’t expect me to trust that God.”

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *“T” Means No Trust*

We distrust Jesus. We have no trust in Jesus. Jesus tells us that to know there is a God, to know God, is to know (trust) Jesus. But for us, Jesus—this impoverished teacher—is not enough

of a God to trust. Jesus, who gets in trouble and dies, cannot be trusted as God. We want something more—an almighty god's very presence to make everything right. Then we will be satisfied that we know God. Show us God!

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *"T" Is for Terminal*
But being shown God is the problem, because to look upon God is to have our own meanness revealed in the light of God's goodness. To look upon God is to have our selfishness revealed in the light of God who gives us all good things. To look upon God is to have our inability to live a life guided by love (verbal abuse) revealed. To look upon God is to reveal our lack of fear of God. If we feared God, we would not ask to see God. But since we ask, we do not fear, for we cannot admit that we are mean and selfish and loveless. We do not fear God and what God is able to reveal about us. Jesus' death reveals to us that death is God's work against all who do not fear God. We have no place with God; and in death we have only a plot to call our home.

PROGNOSIS: THE "T's" GET CROSSED

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Tomb Is Crossed with Resurrection*

Jesus was placed in his own plot, a tomb hewn from rock, and a stone was rolled to cover the opening to the tomb. He took our meanness and selfishness and lovelessness and fearlessness as his own. Therefore he suffered the divine consequences of mean, selfish, loveless, fearless lives: the Cross. And afterward he was placed in a plot. But he is not there anymore. He is risen from the dead! God raised him up to a new life! There is someone greater than death, and it is Jesus. There is someone who can overcome God's work of death, and it is Jesus! He is God's new work for us! Jesus has a new place and it is not a plot. Jesus' place is with God! He promises us that his place with God is our

place with God. He told us he was going to prepare a place for us with God—in his Father's house—and he did. He did it by dying and rising from the dead! To look at Jesus is to see him as crucified and risen for us. To see him is to see God's work of mercy for us mean, selfish, loveless people who do not fear God. Do you want to see God? Let me show you Jesus!

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) : *Distrust Is Crossed with Faith*

This Jesus tells our hearts not to be troubled. "Believe in God, believe also in me." No longer is Jesus just an impoverished teacher. He is God's Son risen from the dead! He is the one who will overcome our deaths and give us life! He is the way of God's mercy to us. He is God's truth of mercy for us. He is, by his resurrection life, our resurrection life. His command, his Gospel imperative of "Believe in me" is an invitation. His invitation is like an offer of a glass of water to a thirsty person, "Here, drink this." The offer moves us to trust the offer and the glass is placed against our lips and we drink. Life is ours!

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Trouble Is Crossed with Jesus*

In this new life in Jesus, the powers that troubled Jesus and killed him will still trouble us. That is what Jesus knows and so tells us, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." Jesus invites us to trust him because he has overpowered those powers by his death and rising. In him, we also will overcome those powers. In Jesus we overpower death. In Jesus we overpower condemnation. In Jesus we overpower the law's demands and its urgings that we trust it as the way to live before God. Jesus is the way, the way of life with God. Jesus is the truth, the truth of God his Father who has mercy on us for Jesus' sake. Jesus is the life, the life God gave him in his resurrection, the same life he gives to all who believe in

him. The way, the truth, and the life are all descriptions of Jesus' work for us. If you want to know what life with God looks like, it comes through the truth of Jesus. "When a person comes to Jesus for the truth [about God], it is not simply a matter of learning and going away. One must belong to the truth (Jn 18.37). Thus, not only at the moment of first belief but always Jesus remains the way" (from *The Gospel According to John*, Raymond Brown, p. 631). Jesus remains the way to God as a God of mercy and forgiveness and resurrection. Every day Jesus is the way. Every moment Jesus is the truth about God's mercy. Every time we are troubled, Jesus is our life. Even when throat cancer and abuse happen, they are not the truth about God. Do you want to see God? Let me show you Jesus, crucified and risen.