

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Watertown, WI**

**“The Antidote for a Troubled Heart”**

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*[Jesus said] “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me” (Jn. 14:1).*

Mark Twain once wrote, “The difference between the almost right word and the right word is the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.” Therefore, writers spend a lot of time in search of lightning. Sometimes I’ll look for the lightning in a book entitled “The Random House Thesaurus of Slang.” It’s a book that translates formal English into slang. Much of American slang would be inappropriate to use. It tends to be abusive, chauvinistic, irreverent, profane and sometimes . . . it’s just right.

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Just for kicks, I looked up the word trouble. In my thesaurus of American slang, there are 142 ways to say you’re in trouble. You’ve heard a lot of them and have probably used a lot of them. “You’re in hot water. You’re in over your head. You’re behind the eight ball. You’re between a rock and a hard place. You’re at the end of your rope. You have no more cards to play. You’ve painted yourself into a corner.” That’s just seven of a 142.

Then I looked up the opposite of being troubled. There were five ways of saying you were at peace, and six ways of saying you were content. 142 ways to say you’re troubled; a half dozen to say you’re not. Doesn’t that say something about us, our condition, and our world?

We know that the word trouble with all its cousins started showing up after Genesis 3, after the fall of Adam and Eve. The result? Job 14, “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.”

Let’s talk about that woman from whom man is born. Think of all the trouble you caused your mother! I might have caused a little myself.

I don’t think I ever told you this, but I was suspended from High School once. (Don’t bother asking. You don’t need to know.) Having been suspended I came home early in the afternoon and sauntered into the house, head hanging low. The first thing I smelled was pipe smoke, which means my grandparents were there, all four of them, and I heard one of them asking my mom, “Why is David home?” Delavan was a small town at the time. Pretty soon everyone knew why David was home.

Dad had already returned to work after lunch, but there was a legal pad on the dining room table and on the top, in my dad’s handwriting were the words, “Work humbly a man.” Underneath was a list of chores to keep me occupied for the next three days. The first thing on the list was to move a dump truck load of sand from here to here. It wasn’t in anyone’s way; he just wanted me to move it.

Think of all the trouble we caused our parents, on this day, specifically our mothers, beginning with the pregnancy itself, the fatigue, nausea, kicking her within the tummy, the Braxton hicks, all those were just shots over the bow to warn of the great pain of childbirth

which also started in Genesis 3. But the trouble we caused our mothers didn't stop there. Oh no we were just warming up.

I'm wondering what trouble you caused your mother. I do hope you have opportunity to thank her today, or at least to thank God for her, and the opportunity to pray King David's prayer with me, "Remember not the sins of my youth, O Lord, but according to your mercy remember me" (Ps. 25:7).

Each of us introduces all kinds of trouble to ourselves and to the world around us. We make poor and impulsive decisions with troubling consequences. We are self-centered creatures by and large, which causes a lot of trouble. We also tend to worry a lot about the future, which has a way of stirring up troubled hearts. A general rule of thumb-if we don't have all the information, we tend to assume the worst. If we don't have all the information, our hearts become deeply troubled. And who of us has all the information?

In our text, that's where the disciples are. In the previous chapter Jesus, on that Holy Thursday, was preparing them for his suffering and death the next day. He's stirring up all kinds of questions in his disciples. They don't understand. They don't have all the information. And Peter feels like he's in hot water because Jesus just told him he will deny him three times. Judas is becoming unglued, for Jesus said the one who will betray him is the one to whom he gives this piece of bread, which Jesus then dipped into the olive oil and gave it right to Judas. The others are also troubled; if Jesus leaves them, what will they have, where will they go, what will they do? If Jesus is executed, can his disciples expect any better? Their hearts are troubled. They're in over their heads. They're all in a stew, or maybe it's a jam that they're in, or it could be a pickle. Whatever it is it's a fine mess they're in.

What about you? I'm wondering what troubles your heart this day. Many of you have been furloughed or have lost your jobs altogether. Some of you don't know how you're going to pay next month's rent. A few of you know you have trouble with an addiction. A number of you have bodies that suddenly seem to be falling apart at the seams. Some of you have spouses that seem distracted and disengaged, kids that seem to be looking for trouble, or houses that you cannot take care of anymore.

Young people, what is it that troubles your hearts? Your body size and shape, or what others are saying about you on social media . . . or aren't saying? Or the impression that everyone else is already totally engaged in the world while you're still holed up at home?

142 ways of saying you're troubled, which must mean there's a whole lot of it going around. So much trouble.

When your hearts are troubled there are some things you shouldn't do. Ps. 146, "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When they die, that very day their plans come to nothing." Who are the princes today in whom you might be tempted to trust a little too much? I've said it before, but don't look to scientists to be your savior. For all our advances in technology, the death rate is still pretty much 100%! Besides, scientists have enough trouble of their own; they don't need or want yours. But our God invites your trouble. Psalm 50, "Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (v. 15). It sounds so easy, but we have a hard time even calling on him. Instead we ruminate in the middle of the night, trying to solve the problem ourselves, as if he didn't exist . . . or doesn't care. For people who confess we are saved by grace, sometimes we sure work at it as if it all depended on us.

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." A tall order that one! And if he had just stopped there it would be the same shallow words we hear all the time. "Don't worry about it. It'll all be fine." Easy enough to say, but empty, devoid of comfort, deficient of any real reason why we shouldn't worry. But the difference is he doesn't stop there. There's more. "Believe in God; Believe in me. In my Father's house are many rooms . . . I'm going there to prepare a place for you!"

"Believe in me" he says. That is, trust that he is who he says he is. Almighty God and merciful Savior. Trust that he did what he set out to do . . . to redeem you, to forgive you, to reconcile you to the Father through his death and resurrection. Trust that he will do what he promises to do: to take care of you, to deliver you, to escort you **through** the valley of the shadow of death.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe. Believe he has a plan for your life, here and now, a good plan, that you're not just drifting through space willy nilly. No, he's not going to leave your life up to chance and circumstance and every fateful puff of wind. He has a plan for your life . . . a good one, and he's even preparing a place for your life to come in his Father's house.

It's the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, which means Christ has already died for us, and is already risen from the dead. It means we need to cultivate our resurrection thinking. When God looks at us, he sees us through the lens of Christ's death and resurrection. We should look at our lives the same way. The victory is won; nothing and no one can undo it. "Believe in me" he says. He has all the power and love necessary to make things right again. Believe he who created you from the dust will be able to piece you back together again after death, even if he has no other raw materials than dry bones and scattered ashes.

Of course, this Christian faith does not preserve us from trouble. Jesus himself told us not to worry about the future because "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Mt. 6). This Christian faith of ours, however, can be the antidote to troubled hearts. For we maintain and know and have been promised that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. There is no trouble so great that it can separate you from his love.

My little paperback thesaurus of slang offers 142 ways of saying we're in trouble. In heaven, I suspect there's not even one way to say that, for the thing no longer exists. It's gone, extinct, and completely forgotten . . . so I'm pretty sure there are no words in heaven to describe it. And if there is a thesaurus in heaven, you won't find any synonyms for pandemic either, or social distancing, or grinding isolation, or crying or pain or death. In heaven, the old order of things has passed away, and the new corona virus certainly belongs to the old order.

However, I do wonder how many words there will be for awe. I wonder how many synonyms there will be for praise, and for grace and for thanks and for love and for life and for joy and for peace.

You know, given the victory is already been won, I don't think we have to wait before we start using those words. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.