

## ***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

### **JOHN 14, 1-7: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”**

We’ve just been celebrating the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, but after his birth we hear very little of him for thirty years. We know that Mary and Joseph returned with their young son to their home town of Nazareth, near the Sea of Galilee, and there Jesus grew up, learned from Joseph to be a carpenter, and lived a normal human life. Everything changed when he emerged from this obscurity to be baptised by his cousin John the Baptist in the River Jordan and to begin three years of ministry, teaching and preaching and performing many miracles which we read about in the Bible, in the books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which are called the Gospels.

The words of Jesus in this passage were spoken to his followers not long before he was crucified. To them the future was very uncertain and they didn’t fully understand what Jesus had told them. Jesus speaks words of reassurance which resonate with us today, living in uncertain times.



Follow the words of John 14, 1-7, on seven panels around the church. The first is just round the corner on the north wall of this little building and the others are on the east wall of the church (right as you look from here) for panels 2, 3 & 4, and on the west wall (5, 6 and 7). The translation of the Bible used is the New International Version, and you can look it up on the internet under Bible Gateway.

**“Do not let your hearts be troubled.  
Trust in God: trust also in me.”**

**1**

If anybody asks you how you are, chances are that you will reply “Fine”. For a lot of us, however, it might be more truthful to admit that we are OK, but not totally fine. We have been in various stages of lockdown since March, and the number of people catching Covid-19 is again very high, hospitals are busy, and we don’t know when the vaccine will reach us. Most of us are vaguely troubled; most of us would admit to a certain level of anxiety or unease.

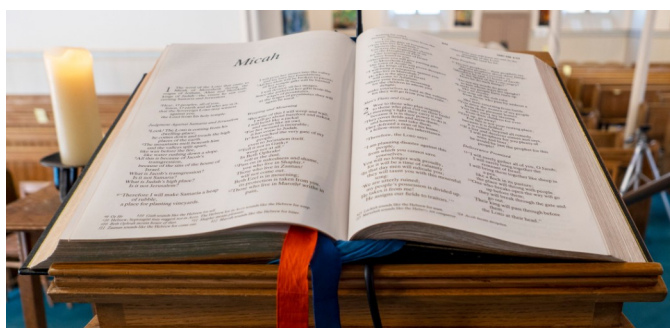


Jesus tells us “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” We are urged to trust—in the God who made us, and in his Son. To trust in an awesome, all-powerful God, who keeps his promises. To trust in Jesus, who brings God that much nearer. Jesus is a hand to hold, a shoulder to lean on.

Jesus reminds us by his very existence that God is a giving God—a God who gave us his only Son. He reminds us how much God loves us, and that can be the most wonderful reassurance to troubled hearts.

***Lord, help us to trust in you to care for us always.  
Thank you for the gift of Jesus, the baby of Bethlehem,  
who became our Saviour and Lord, and our friend for ever.***

***Now walk to the right of the church building to find panels 2, 3 and 4***



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**“In my Father’s house are many  
rooms; if it were not so,  
I would have told you.  
I am going there to prepare a place for you.”**

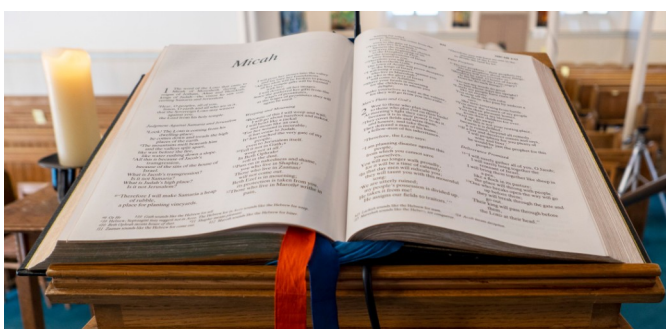
**2**



It can be quite worrying arriving somewhere late at night, particularly in a foreign country, and seeing “No vacancies” everywhere. This pandemic has brought with it an awareness of the possibility of death which has been disturbing to many. What happens when you die? Where do you go? Is heaven something you have to earn? No chance for me, then. All sorts of questions have crowded in.

Jesus’s friends weren’t living through a pandemic, but they were very aware that Jesus was in danger of being arrested and put to death, and knew that they would also be in danger as his followers. Jesus assures his friends that there is room enough in heaven for everybody. What’s more, he tells them that he is going on ahead to prepare places for them. There will not just be room—there will be a warm welcome!

***Lord, thank you for the assurance that there is room  
for all in heaven, even me.  
Help me to hold on to that hope in my heart.***



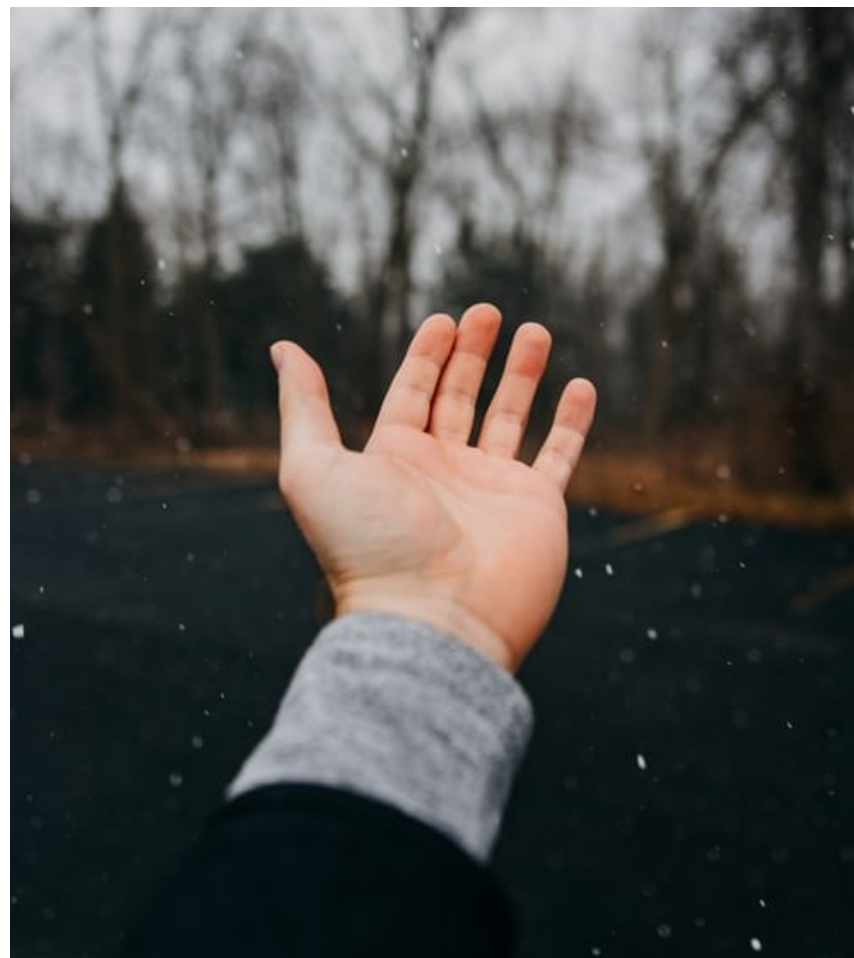
***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

**“And if I go and prepare a place for you,  
I will come back  
and take you to be with me  
that you also may be where I am.”**

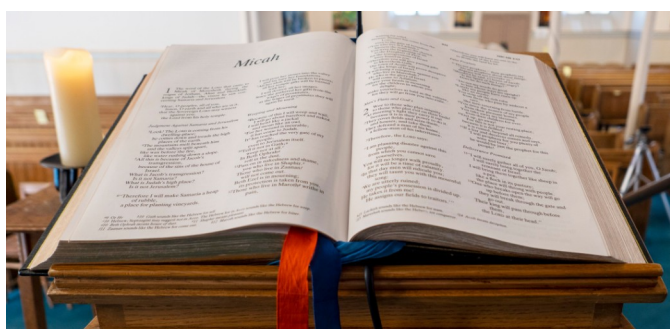
**3**

Here is a wonderful promise from Jesus to his followers—he is coming back. A clear indication that death is not the end and that Jesus will overcome it, and will return.

An assurance too that wherever heaven may be we will have the company of Jesus for ever. He himself will take us there. There is no need to agonise about what will happen when we die—Jesus has gone ahead and our place is secured, and he will be there to take our hand.



***Lord, you have gone before us.  
You have shown by your resurrection that death has been defeated.  
Help me to live my life to the full now  
and in the wonderful future you have for me.***



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**“You know the way to the place where I  
am going.”**

**4**

**Thomas said to him,  
“Lord we don’t know where you are going,  
so how can we know the way?”**

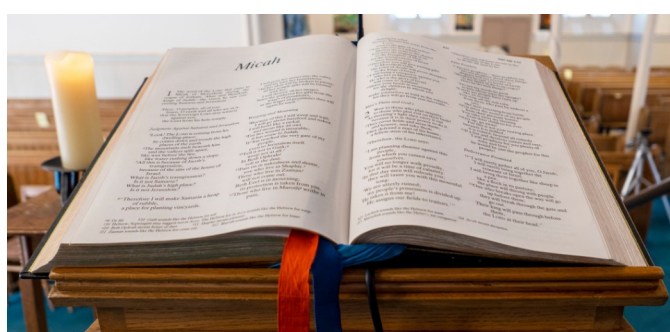
Thomas voices all our doubts for us here. It’s not that Thomas doesn’t believe in God, that he doesn’t trust Jesus, he’s just voicing the doubts that creep in all the time, and he likes to be sure. Is there really a heaven? We have no idea where it is or what it will be like. How can we know we are going there? And how can we know the way? Should we be living our lives differently?

We usually set out for a walk knowing where we were going to end up, and knowing the way, but this is more than a walk. We are talking about our lives. We need to find out what we should be doing.

***Lord, let us not be afraid to voice our doubts and fears to you.  
Help us to overcome them, and trust in your love.***



***Now walk along the back of the church and turn left to find panels 5, 6 and 7***



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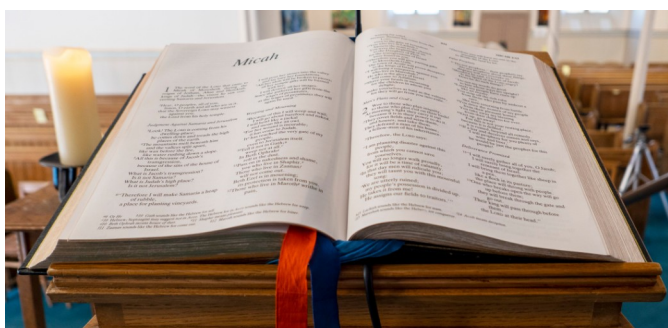
**Jesus answered,  
“I am the way and the truth  
and the life.”**

**5**

Jesus makes it clear to his disciples that he is all they need to find their way to God's kingdom. Perhaps it is when we admit that Jesus is everything we need that we put ourselves on the right path. The way of Jesus is the way of love—he told us that the two main commandments were to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourself. He taught us how to do that through everything he said and did. If we learn from him and follow, then we will discover the truth about God and the life of fullness Jesus promised to us now and for ever.



***Lord Jesus, open my heart to receive you  
and to let you guide and fill and colour my life on earth  
and onwards into eternity.***



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**“No-one comes to the Father  
except through me.”**

**6**

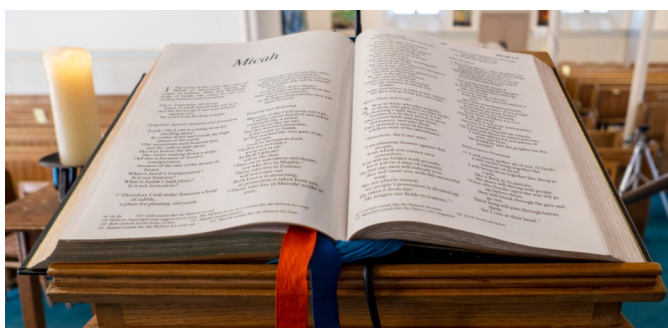


There is only one way to find out what God is like and that is through Jesus. He is the very embodiment of God. We get to know him through the books of the New Testament in the Bible, through prayer, and through the community of his followers on earth, the Christian Church.

New Year is a good time to resolve to get to know Jesus better, in all these ways. Through him we will find our way to God our Heavenly Father.

***Lord Jesus, you show me what God is like.  
Let me not be distracted by any other teachings.  
Teach me the truth and give me the fullness of life you promise.***

***Panel no. 7 is on the church wall behind the cairn on the right***



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**“If you really knew me,  
you would know my Father as well.**

**From now on,  
you do know him and have seen him.”**

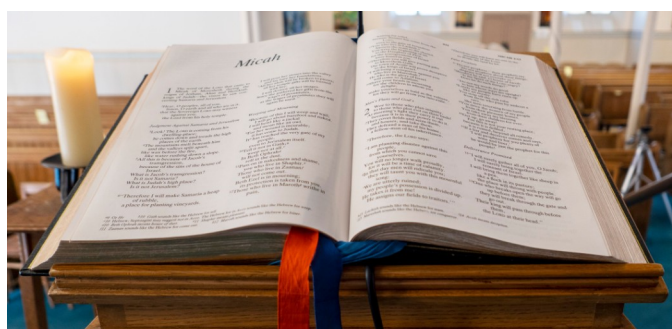
**7**



All too soon the disciples would be seeing Jesus on the cross, but then three days later they would see him risen from the dead and they would begin to understand that this was all part of God's plan to save the world. They would begin to understand the depth of love that God has for every one of his people, and Jesus' past words would now make sense.

John wrote his Gospel when he was an old man—he had taken years to fully understand who Jesus was and what was important. In his First Letter (also in the Bible) he talks about love coming from God, and he says “God is love”. As we get to know Jesus we realise more and more that God's love is there for us unconditionally. We are so blessed!

***Lord, I can scarcely take it in that you gave your Son  
to die for me so that I can have life.  
Help me to love with such a selfless love!***



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