

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?3 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. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”

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

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

A Flight Plan

Almost every flight has a flight plan filed in advance detailing departure, arrival, estimated time in route, and even alternate airports in case of bad weather. This is something a pilot prepares in advance of departure because commercial flights are hours of boredom occasionally punctuated by moments of sheer terror. During the hours of boredom one might think the time in advance preparing was a waste of time but then there can be those moments of terror when everyone on the flight is thankful for the careful preparations made in advance. Either way a flight plan provides comfort and assurance during hours of boredom or moments of terror.

Life is like a long airplane ride only you don’t exactly know what stops you will make along the way, when you will get there, but you know where you are going. We also know that no matter how smooth the flight life is often punctuated by moments of terror. Larry experienced the ups and downs of hospital, rehabilitation, doctors visits. There were points when the plane looked to be taking off as he regained strength but that was only followed by an ambulance ride Larry referred to as the airplane. It was rough but Larry was ready and even in his moments of doubt we know where he was heading.

We know because of the careful planning of his pilot. Just as Jesus prepared his disciples in advance. There during his pre-flight safety speech (the one usually ignored) he comforted them with the assurance that everything will be okay no matter how rough the ride. While life may be hours of boredom punctuated by moments of terror Jesus wants us ready so that when terror comes we don’t need to be afraid. Realize the one who has prepared us is the same one who has prepared Larry.

As Jesus makes his way through his pre-flight checklist he reminds his disciples where he is going and what will happen along the way. They’re in for a surprise because they haven’t been listening to the inflight safety demonstration. Every time they’ve gone out Jesus has

handled everything. He's healed the sick, brought back the dead, and even even calmed storms on the sea of Galilee. The chief priests and teachers of the law are worried. There wasn't anything that Jesus couldn't take care of. It was with confidence that Peter pulled out his sword and takes on a detachment of soldiers but the flight goes down.

It's not a smooth landing either. Their flight is a crash and burn. Jesus didn't stop. He let them arrest him. He was put on false trial and then crucified for all to see. It's a moment of sheer terror and Jesus wanted them to know, this is all part of the plan. It's all okay. Jesus wanted them informed and comforted, reassured that no matter what happens he is in control. This is part of his flight plan.

These words were spoken to them but they were recorded to comfort us. But we often suppose that as long as the flight is smooth, there is nothing on our radar, then there is no danger. But life is like a fight. What goes up, must come down. When the flight starts to head South we then realize there is so much to be troubled by. Larry was troubled by his health, his RV, his granddaughters wedding, what's going to happen? What he has to do? Whether or not he is ready?

His heart was troubled and if you are troubled, confused, concerned, overwhelmed then you're in good company. Because at the ripe old age of 33 Jesus left when the disciples had hoped he would stay around for years to come, fly off into the sunset together. But that didn't happen and they were troubled. The devil, the world, and even our own conscious have a way of troubling us. The devil throws everything we've done back in our face. The world twists scripture to condemn our confidence, pointing away from the cross, away from Jesus' words, and back at our anxious hearts screaming, "You're not ready to weather this storm. You have not prepared as you should. You've squandered your life up to this point and now it's mine." While death and despair is what we deserve for our lack of trust.

Jesus tells us instead, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*" Don't be afraid of what's coming. *You believe in God.* Whatever help and consolation you look for from God expect it from me. *Believe in me.* These are the words that Jesus speaks comforting sinners and doubters alike. A fearful and troubled heart does not come from Christ. Jesus makes promises. *I'm going to prepare a place for you. I will come back to take you to be with me. You know the way.*

But Thomas still thinking of his earthly comfort as a flight that continues forever says, "*We don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?*" Jesus prepares them, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"

Jesus says, "I am the flight plan. I am the plane, I am the pilot. I am the only way home. You know me. Be confident in me."

Jesus says the same to us. These were words that Jesus spoke to Larry through his pastor at an early age when he was held over the waters of baptism when Jesus gave him the confidence that he was, is, and remains a child of God. These are the same words of comfort that Jesus again spoke to Larry when he said, "*Take and eat this is my body give for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins.*" These are the same words that are written for Larry's comfort and for our own. Jesus prepared a table for Larry in the presence of his enemies, in the face of death there was comfort and assurance. This doesn't depend on you or your confidence but your Pilot and his plan.

Salvation doesn't depend on our confidence our comfort as we stare out a small window in a hospital overwhelmed by boredom. Salvation doesn't depend on our confidence during these hours punctuated by sheer terror because we have a Jesus who remained calm for us. It doesn't matter how you get on that plane - kicking and screaming, terrified because Jesus saves and Larry - he was on that flight. And one day he will take us to be with him. One day he will restore our bodies.

Jesus doesn't say, "Death is part of life. At least you have the memories." He gives us so much more than pious crap and wishful thinking. He brings real comfort for all who follow in faith. Because no matter what happens to you there is a place prepared for you. No matter what happens to you in this world Jesus is coming back to take you to be with him. No matter what happens there is a better place that no one can take away prepared for you. Make plans. Moments of terror will come.

Larry knew and he also had a flight plan, a path laid out for him. A flight, life may be hours of boredom punctuated by moments of terror. That's why the church - those called out, Larry, Judy, the people exists. We point people to God's plan, path, and plane: Jesus. His word for us during hours of boredom or moments of terror, "Do not be afraid. You believe in God; believe also in me. There are many rooms and you will see Larry again in the flesh." He has arrived. You will too. Amen.