

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

Ed Dunn

What a time we've lived through together these last twelve months! How could we have ever imagined a global virus that would lock us down for so long? Or social injustice and unrest that would threaten to tear our country apart? We've lived through wildfires out West, hurricane season back East, and a "battleground" election set smack dab in the middle of it all. These have been troubling times, indeed. And yet, we now find ourselves in the midst of a new Easter season. As we do, what perspective can we see in the life of Jesus to help us face and feel his peace during troubling times such as these?

The gospel account is well familiar to us during this special time of year. John 14:1-27 (KJV) gives us a glimpse into a conversation as Jesus reminds his followers: *"Let not your heart be troubled."* As we look at both Jesus' context and words, I must admit I love the poetry of the old King James version. The phrasing in this translation, "Let not," is such a beautiful way of expressing a thought we may not

hear so often these days. Beginning the thought with the word, "let," is by no means an accident. Please, "let" me explain.

We see Jesus seated at a table for a meal with those closest to him. We have to believe Jesus knew well what was coming. He knew what many in the Jewish community were hoping for that Passover.

He knew the depths of the insecurity and constant state of scheming of the religious authorities. At the same time, Jesus also knew the extent of Roman authority and brutality, and how the Romans used that brutality to maintain order. Soon, the world around them all would erupt, and Jesus would suffer an unjust public and painful death.

Despite all that was taking place around them, where was Jesus' focus? How was he facing the troubling times in front of him? In the face of events that would most certainly trouble any human heart, Jesus was focused on the peace within.

Hard as it may be for us to fully imagine, just hours before a series of terrible events would unfold, Jesus



ED DUNN joins Plain Truth Ministries as our newest editor, staff writer and host of our latest video feature, "This Month at PTM." Watch for it on our CWR blog.

was offering the peace his followers would need to face all that would happen to him, and, all that would eventually happen to them, as well.

Jesus said, *“Let not your heart be troubled.”* The word, “let,” indicates that we have the chance to choose to participate in his peace. The peace of Christ does not force itself upon us. The Holy Spirit does not violate our free will. Instead, we choose to let, to allow, his peace to do its work within us. We share in the process of transformation that takes place. As we “let,” we face our own troubling events in life with a deep sense of calm. Christ in us calms us.

We participate in a collaborative effort. We know the peace of Christ resides within us through the Holy Spirit.

We focus on that peace, give thanks for it, and “let” it complete its perfect work. No matter what we may face, by Christ and his indwelling peace within us, we allow there to be space around our troubles.

We breathe and stand fast in him, remembering how he concludes his conversation:

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you . . . let not your heart be troubled.” (John 14:27, KJV).

With all we’ve lived through together these last twelve months, we give thanks that Christ in us gives us peace and a sense of calm. May you have a wonderful Easter season! □

Ed Dunn is an associate editor with Plain Truth Ministries.

When Jesus Rode into Town

Greg Albrecht

(continued from page 3)

homeless person – to the poor, prophets, priests and prostitutes.

He opens his arms to you and me and everyone not by our deeds – not by how well we have done, not by how we have measured up or how we failed to measure up – he opens his arms to us by his goodness and his supreme love, demonstrated for us on his cross.

Theologian Jurgen Moltmann points to Jesus on the Cross, “This is God and God is like this.”

Jesus rode into town for the godforsaken and the rejected and spurned and the impoverished and the oppressed – ALL are invited to come to know the crucified God. It is in his death that God is with us – ALL of us.

It is in his death that Jesus opens his arms to us all, and in the other bookend, his glorious resurrection, that he collects us all, drawing all of us to himself. As Jesus said, in John 12:32, *“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”*

Christ-less religion presents a tame, manageable, easily manipulated God – a god it has remade in its image to please its own agenda. But God cannot be confined to a religious cage – he is not frilly and cuddly and decked out in pastel colors like those found on Easter eggs.

God will not be defined or manipulated or managed by anyone – he is who he is. Let us celebrate him as he is on Palm Sunday, rather than a god we

wish to create in our own image.

When they crucified Jesus they crucified the great I AM of the burning bush – the bush that burns and burns and remains, no matter what, because of the great I AM. *The burning bush did not burn up.* The crucified Jesus did not remain dead in his tomb.

It was the great I AM of that burning bush, who religion had thought was dead and confined to a tomb, who burst out of that tomb, in a flash of blinding light. In his resurrection King Jesus, with his counter-intuitive, upside-down, paradoxical kingdom of heaven confounded them again. Jesus cannot be destroyed or silenced.

Jesus comes to us in his vulnerability but yet in one of those stunning and shocking paradoxes of the gospel, it is in his vulnerability that he lives in us, forever and ever. Our risen Lord is not with and in us now by virtue of military power or strength of arms as we perceive strength and power. Our Lord Jesus Christ is with us and in us by virtue of all those things we determine to be weak and vulnerable.

- In return for torture, hatred, violence and crucifixion, Jesus gave forgiveness.

- In return for abuse, he gave an embrace.

- In return for evil, he responded with love and goodness.

We humans never showed so much hate for God as when we crucified him. In the person of Jesus, on his cross, God never showed so much love for you and me than when he accepted all of our hatred and forgave us. □

Greg Albrecht is president and pastor of Plain Truth Ministries.