

Anchor Deep for the Coming Storm Manuscript

[John 14:1-7](#)

Anchors

Just before waking on Jan. 1 I dreamed that I was in a school that was on the beach and we were facing a tsunami.

Strangely I woke to learn that there was an active warning of a Tsunami in Japan at that very moment as the result of an earthquake and sadly, as of Saturday morning there were 110 confirmed dead from that earthquake with many still listed as missing.

Occasionally we use disaster words like tsunami to describe a difficulty we are currently facing. I don't know if it's the right term in this instance but 2024 promises to provide stiff challenges. We could say that near the beginning of every year of course, but this year we face an unprecedented presidential election, dangerous wars on two major fronts in the world (one of which appears to be expanding), and ongoing confusion regarding fundamental questions about who we are targeting the most vulnerable among us. We could list more. Many Americans are preparing for such disorienting times by scaling back their engagement in church life. That's not going to work out well for anyone. In the first three weeks of the new year, we will carefully lay out Anchors from the only One who knows what the future holds.

This morning I want to share a message called Anchor Deep for the Coming Storm.

I will do that from [John 14:1-7](#). Jesus has just told his disciples that he was going away and that they could not go with him at that moment. They were undone by this news. It prompted Peter to promise far more than he could deliver in courage and obedience and he would publically fail in spectacular fashion. So in spite of the fact that Jesus was the one who was only hours away from experience the greatest suffering any human being had ever or would ever face. But even in that moment, he was the one doing the comforting.

Which leads me to this and we will get to the text. Dane Ortland in his wonderful book Deeper says that Holy Spirit provokes inner change in believers, causes believers to grow strong by making Christ wonderful to us.

How can you calm an anxious heart? What's your strategy for growing strong for disorienting events you know will come this year?

1. Exert active trust in God

[John 14:1](#) (ESV)

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

• Exert. Apply Exercise. Employ. Wield. Utilize. Make use of

When the person who assures you not to worry happens to be the world’s greatest expert in that specific category, then that would be good reason not to worry. Jesus is the king of kings and the Lord of lords. He not only is more wise and more intelligent than anyone who has ever lived. He is infinite in his wisdom and infinite in his intelligence. He is infinite in his knowledge. When he says, “let not your hearts be troubled,” that’s good reason to be at peace. You don’t have to wonder if there’s something he doesn’t know about. If I say to you, “let not your heart be troubled,” then you could rightly say, but you don’t understand, you don’t know about this turmoil in my soul that I wouldn’t even know how to describe to you. You might be right about your assessment of my ability to understand. Perhaps, I nor any other human being will ever be able to fully enter the depths of your grief and anxiety and pain. But you cannot say that of Jesus.

Satan lies to keep us looked up in cycles of anxiety and dis-ease when we think that “no one can understand me; my problem is unique. My challenges are harder than what other people face. I am an unusual case.” That way of thinking comes from self-focused pride that represents a lack of trust in God. If you say that, you are saying you are beyond God’s help, that God cannot send people into your life who will love you well.

****Believe in God; believe in God; believe in God. **** That’s a direct command. To not do what Jesus says to do here represents sin; is sin. He does not say believe that God exists. That’s actually the condition of every human being, atheist or not. We can’t not know that God exists. That’s not what he means. He means what we mean by trust. Trust God. Trust that in God lies the solution to your heart’s greatest ache.

This simple command represents the whole ballgame. If we trust God, then we will know for instance that the way to enhance that trust means trusting what he says when he says, “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” We will not believe that something else matters more to our well-being than gathering with God’s people for worship every Sunday. We will not think that something else would matter more than upending our life so that no matter what else happens, we will give time to hearing, reading, meditating, and studying God’s word. The path to our hearts not being troubled is real time active trust in God. And the

path to greater faith, greater belief, greater trust in God, comes through fierce intake of the word of God into our souls.

Believe also in me: By these words Jesus further reveals that he is God. I say “further” because he does this on many other occasions, where no other conclusion can be drawn from his words. No decent human being would talk like this without some qualification. We might encourage another person to trust us. But we would not imply, as Jesus does here, that someone should trust us in the same way that they trust God the Father.

The NKJV and the KJV before it, translates the last phrase in verse 1 as, “you believe in God.” (italics mine) I grew up reading the KJV. I didn’t purchase a modern translation until I was in college. I read and heard this passage a lot before that time. I think that I have always read that as Jesus saying, “you already believe in God,” as if their faith in God was complete and there was no room for progress and no need for Jesus to encourage them; no need for us to actively lean in to trusting him in the moment. I contend that such perfect settled faith in God will never exist in this life. We will never have perfect knowledge and understanding of God. God is infinite, and so since we can never know God fully, we can’t trust him fully, because our conception of him isn’t complete. There will always be room to progress in our grasp of who he is. When we grow in knowing God, we grow in our trust in him.

This truth can reshape our view of heaven, because most believers have, at one time or another, wondered how heaven could be interesting forever. We are delighted by many other experiences and people.

For instance, I know a man who said, “if my dogs won’t go with me to heaven, I don’t want to go there.” That thought reveals a tragically small view of the glory of God as if somehow the glory of something God created could surpass his glory.

We will never through all eternity stop seeing and discovering and delighting in attributes of the character of God that we have never before seen.

To this point, [Revelation 4](#) describes a vision of what’s taking place in heaven in God’s direct presence right now. Notice particularly verse 8 from the ESV: 8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!

These living creatures with eyes all around them and within them imply that they see reality more clearly than any human. And in God’s direct presence the only response that makes any sense is to never stop saying, “holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, because no other response to the glory of God makes any sense. They don’t do that as robots. God does not

demand that these creatures worship so he will hear it. No, it is the spontaneous response of these beings to the endless glory of God. We too will endlessly delight in him beyond the greatest delights we have ever experienced on earth. So, as our knowledge of God grows so grows our delight and our confidence in him.

But that's only one reason our faith will never be complete in this life. Not only does our grasp of God grow over time, but our awareness of him comes and goes. Those beings in his direct presence cannot fail to constantly express stunned worship. Such beings could never be troubled about anything else because they constantly gaze upon the glory of God. But our attention comes and goes. We forget God when we worry. We deliberately suppress our awareness of God when we choose to sin. We get distracted by far lesser matters.

It's not that God is mad at us when we don't think about him. God does not need us. He chooses to reveal himself to us out of his mercy and grace. As Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Thee". We need our vision of God constantly refreshed. Another verse that speaks to this call for consistent focus on God is [Isaiah 26:3](#) (ESV) You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. The path to perfect peace is to keep our minds fixed on who God is. Or, as the apostle Paul said in [Philippians 4:6-7](#), "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Making our requests known to God, in other words praying, comes from trusting God. Trust produces prayer. Not trusting moves us away from prayer.

And so, when Jesus says, "believe also in me," he is not saying, "you already trust God, so you can trust me also." Rather he gently commands us, "Believe in God," meaning that you will never move beyond the need to actively trust God moment by moment. And Jesus, just as he commands us to trust the Father, commands to place the same kind of active trust in him.

So whatever circumstance breaks your heart or lie from Satan that keeps you imprisoned. Talk to someone who can help you to locate the Scripture that applies to your need and then actively pray that and say, Jesus, I choose to believe your truth rather than Satan's lies. Please help my unbelief.

How can you calm an anxious heart? What's your strategy for growing strong for disorienting events you know will come this year?

2. Locate your sense of belonging in Jesus

[John 14:2-4 \(ESV\)](#)

2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going."

He had told them in 13:33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going you cannot come. And it seems to me that this has set them off into that old familiar ache we have a lack of peace. Jesus brought them hope and life and peace but he was going away.

Jesus directs their attention away from the present to an eternal future. Jesus spoke about a tangible experience of rooms and of a home, a place where we will permanently belong. I go to prepare a place for you.

Here lies the secret anchor we all need. How unsettled we feel! how out of sorts! How we long for a place to call home! We tend to settle for counterfeit. Our longing for this comes in our self-protective behavior to avoid interaction with others who by their own struggle for a place to call home challenge our sense of rootlessness and so we stay in or we stay where we are not troubled by the desires of others. We stay in and we watch Netflix where we can control what we watch and for how long we watch without any interference from someone else.

Jesus to the disciples and to us when our most precious anchors are threatened in this life, says to us I go, I go, the son of God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the creator of the universe says to me and to you. I go to prepare a place for you. This is not the end. This difficulty you face is a moment of time. But those who are rightly connected to me have a home. I am preparing your room. You have a place to belong that can never be taken away.

In this moment I look forward to going home. By God's mercy my parents are both still living and they still live in the house we moved into when I was 9. My grandfather built the house before that. I have an incredible sense of belonging there. But eventually, if Jesus tarries, he will take mom and dad home to to be with him and that place won't be the same. My room there won't be the same and why would i care if mom and dad weren't there anyway.

I know that I know that not everyone has had such a blessing and to whom much is given much is required. Because some of you have the opposite of this story. You had a terrible

relationship with your parents or no relationship. You may feel you have never known a real sense of home or belonging in this life. Hear the words of Jesus, in my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? The Lord Jesus is preparing a place for you. Listen to the rootedness of that word. Regardless of your experience here. You have a home and you are on your way there now. It's just a matter of time.

I will come again. We don't think about this enough.

Think about reunions. Not long ago I told of the reunion Kat and I had in the Louisville airport when I had not seen her for 10 weeks just 6 months before our wedding. But every time I see my kids or grandkids coming through the door of my home. Or when I know I'm going to see mom or dad or my friends and family over the years, when I know I'm getting a chance to see them again it is a sweet reunion.

We can magnify that sense of reunion many times over to get the sense of what this would mean to them and the comfort that it could mean for us. When Jesus first uttered these words they likely couldn't really hear them. They heard the words, but they couldn't grasp their significance. But imagine later, especially as John under the direction of the Holy Spirit and all of these things are being brought to remembrance. I can easily imagine John weeping openly as he writes these words. Remember he was the one who seemed the most emotionally connected to Jesus. What comfort this would bring to him and could bring to us. I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. There it is. That's the money line. That's what we need. That's what they knew they needed. We aren't yet sure.

But what did Jesus mean when he said, you know the way to where I am going. That points to the last clue we need here to anchor deep for the coming storm.

How can you calm an anxious heart? What's your strategy for growing strong for disorienting events you know will come this year?

3. Fix your future hope

[John 14:5-7](#) (ESV)

5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

As Jesus prepared the disciples for the meat grinder they were about to go through, he assured them through their grief at hearing that he was going away. He assured them that he would come again and take them to himself. "I will come again and take you to myself." That phrase lines up perfectly with the far more well examined verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life . . ." The goods of the Christian life come through Jesus and through being with him. Earlier this morning I spend some time pondering [Psalm 105:4](#) (ESV) Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! This command corresponds well to the words of Jesus recorded here in [John 14](#). We seek the Lord and his strength, we seek his presence continually by squarely focusing our attention on the person of the Lord Jesus. What we crave, what the world craves this very morning can only be found in him. Jesus also assures them they already know the way to where he was going. They already possessed all that they needed.

But Thomas does not yet feel assured. He does not think that he has enough information yet. So he asks, "Lord, we do not know here you are going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus answers Thomas that it's not a geographic location in this world or the next that you need to be concerned about finding. Rather, what you need is to trust me and what I am telling you. I am the way. It's not a way of life you need. There are no further directions. You need me. I am the way. And I am the truth in and of myself and so everything that I say to you is the truth and you keep trusting me and what I am telling you. And I am the life. You will only find what you are craving, what your heart is crying out in me.

Obviously Thomas knew Jesus. He didn't have any trouble in knowing who he was in contrast to other people. However, that's not what Jesus means. He means do you know me and know who I am and what I am about. Knowing me is knowing the Father. But then we learn from the last phrase in verse 7 that he was not inserting uncertainty, but rather assures Thomas in this moment, from now on you do know him and you have seen him. It's as if he is saying, "Thomas, this can be settled for you. You don't need to worry yourself about this. You do know the Father and you have seen the Father. And no matter what happens to you or what lack you perceive in the days ahead, this is what you need to anchor you through whatever hardship comes.

This verse is often used when discussing how a person comes to faith in Christ. That is rightly so but Jesus delivers this word to believers. He is talking to his inner circle. It is an intimate and a quiet gather. I am the way and the truth and the life. I am your connection in more profound ways than you are grasping. I'm not just a way to a destination. I am the truth itself. I am the very source of your life. I am the truth.

Satan knows that Jesus is the way the truth and the life. But he doesn't want that and he doesn't love Jesus, that's the difference. Without the relationship, without seeing Jesus as wonderful, without seeing God as Father, son and Holy Spirit as this text will clearly go on to do, then Michael Reeves explains that

". . . my relationship with him can be little better than my relationship with any traffic cop (meaning no offense to any readers in the police force). Let me put it like this: if, as never happens, some fine cop were to catch me speeding and so breaking the rules, I would be punished; if, as never happens, he failed to spot me or I managed to shake him off after an exciting car chase, I would be relieved. But in neither case would I love him. And even if, like God, he chose to let me off the hook for my law-breaking, I still would not love him. I might feel grateful, and that gratitude might be deep, but that is not at all the same thing as love. And so it is with the divine policeman: if salvation simply means him letting me off and counting me as a law-abiding citizen, then gratitude (not love) is all I have. In other words, I can never really love the God who is essentially just The Ruler. And that, ironically, means I can never keep the greatest command: to love the Lord my God. Such is the cold and gloomy place to which the dark goat path takes us.

The other way to think about God is lamp-lit and evenly paved: it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is, in fact, The Way. It is a lane that ends happily in a very different place, with a very different sort of God. How? Well, just the fact that Jesus is "the Son" really says it all. Being a Son means he has a Father. The God he reveals is, first and foremost, a Father. "I am the way and the truth and the life," he says. "No one comes to the Father except through me" ([Jn 14:6](#)). That is who God has revealed himself to be: not first and foremost Creator or Ruler, but Father. Reeves, Michael. *Delighting in the Trinity* (pp. 20-21). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

So here also lies another reason for us to marvel at the glory and the wonder and yes the beauty of Jesus. In spite of his overwhelming emotional pain, he perfectly brings help and comfort to his disciples. He provides further assurance that not only will he soon go to prepare a place for you, specifically designed for them. But what good would what be without him. This will be no palatial structure but devoid of what makes that location meaningful. No, the assurance is this: Not only was he going away to prepare a place for them. But I will come again and will take you to myself,

How can you calm an anxious heart? What's your strategy for growing strong for disorienting events you know will come this year?

Exert active trust in God

Locate your sense of belonging in Jesus

Fix your future hope in God as he is revealed as the Trinity.

By loving him and desiring him.