

As I began thinking about a title for my talk this morning, my mind went to Dad's Army and when trouble was on the way for Captain Mannerling's men, you would hear Lance Corporal Jones shout 'Don't panic, don't panic', followed by Private Frazer declaring 'we're doomed'. Because the context of our reading this morning sees the Disciples beginning to panic knowing that Jesus is about to leave them.

But I want to tell you of my own experiences of panicking. Alison and I were on holiday in Tuscany about 14 years ago. Josh was about 2 ½ and one evening he started coughing in our apartment with what can only be described as a bark. It was extremely scary, because it seemed as though the child could not get air into his lungs properly. Anyway we soon realised that it was croup, so we ran a hot bath to get steam into the bathroom to try and ease his breathing. Nothing was working and the more time went on Alison began to really panic. In the end we decided to take him to hospital. Now just to add to the commotion I had lost my glasses earlier and so couldn't really see very well which was going to make for some interesting driving to the nearest A&E. On top of that, I was running around the apartment trying to find the car keys. They were no where to be found, and then I realised I had done the most stupid thing. The keys had been set in the boot earlier in the day but they were now locked inside the car. Can you imagine, it's the middle of the night, we have a child crying with the croup, I have a wife panicking, and now I can't get into the car. Well, drastic times call for drastic measures. I got the largest boulder lying nearby and threw it at the side window of the car. Of course, I never considered that I am as weak as a wet facecloth. So as I lobbed the boulder at the window, it hit the side panel of the hire car instead. Now the car is wrecked. I threw the boulder again but it didn't break the window. Time was running out, so I rushed back to the apartment block and knocked frantically at the apartment door next to us. Thankfully the couple who we had got to know helped by giving me the keys of their hire car, and so we dashed off to the hospital, me driving with no glasses, a car back at the apartment wrecked, but the end of the story was that Josh after some steroids was a lot better.

What I learnt in that moment, was that it's one thing to deal with the scary stuff of life when you are at home, but it's way different to be dealing with it in a foreign country where you know no one, and you feel completely helpless. Can you imagine the feeling of panic that set in with the Disciples in John 14?

Remember that these guys have been focused on following Jesus, they've quit everything, and now Jesus is beginning to prepare them, that it's time for him to return to his Father in heaven. He tells them twice in this chapter not to let their hearts be troubled. These guys were panicking, but Jesus is telling them that they don't need to because he's going to send them a helper.

So let's see what Jesus teaches us about this helper he sends, and how he wants us to know the same comfort that it would bring the disciples. We're going to think about how we get his help, we're going to look at what he helps us with, and finally we're going to consider him dwelling in us.

## 1. How do we get his help?

Whenever we got Alison's car, she was determined that it would have satnav because the last car we realised that SATNAV wasn't part of the standard features. It was an added extra. It seems unfair that only certain people can afford the added extras? Folks, that's never the case with God. God loves us so much that he wants us to know that his Kingdom richly gives, and that is seen in the gift of the Holy Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit comes on all standard models. The day you gave your life over to Jesus, you received the Holy Spirit that day – he is dwelling in you. It's not just for some. Our reading today in verse 15 & 16 Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth". That's the Holy Spirit.

Folks, remember the order here in verse 15 – we love Jesus, we keep his commands, and the Holy Spirit dwells in us to help. How often do we hear the wrong instructions from some religious folks – if you just obey what God teaches you, then he'll love you. That idea is not biblical. There is no sense of grace in this. This instead is saying that we are fearful of his judgment instead of seeing that he is loving and full of grace towards us.

Imagine if all I did as a dad was motivate my children to do things based on my force upon them and their fear of me. There might be some level of obedience because otherwise the child will fear being punished. But that child will never give love back. They will submit to an oppressive parent until they can escape. So when they reach teenage years, surprise, surprise they go crazy. But the child who sees the love of their parents towards them, will ultimately desire to obey and respect the parent. Obedience doesn't produce love, it is love that drives obedience. Remember the order - it's his love, our response in obedience, and his gift of the Holy Spirit.

So the obvious question this morning for you is do you have the Holy Spirit within you? Have you turned from your sins? Have you recognised this and trusted Jesus who died for you? Has Jesus become your Lord and treasure? If you haven't then I would encourage you today to consider that. Go onto our website, and there's a section called Who is Jesus? (<https://theunitedparish.org.uk/who-is-jesus/>) And in there is a prayer of commitment. Pray it for yourself, and receive the Holy Spirit today.

I know the Holy Spirit dwells within me and is my helper but the question that follows on is this, does he get all of my attention. I have to be really honest folks, and I hope I'm not the only one, but there will be days and sometimes weeks where I live my life like panic sets in, I feel abandoned a bit like that scary moment in Tuscany, where no one seems to be able to help. In those moments I don't seek Jesus, I don't pray, and I don't know how to deal with issues that come my way. Is that you today? Well if it is know this. When I know that he is **always** there as my helper, I then realise that as I come to him in the mornings and read his Word and pray, inviting him into the stuff of

the day, into the stuff of my life, I feel that incredible comfort knowing that he's not just present but he is within me trying to stir me into a closer walk with the Father. He's there to help. Today folks we need to know his help. What area today do you need that most?

## 2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing is to understand his role as Helper.

We see in our reading that the Holy Spirit reminds us we are God's children. Verse 18 says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you". For some of you, your past represents a brokenness where you have not known a father or mother because they left you at an early age. And Jesus is saying that his Spirit will never abandon you. The role of the Holy Spirit is that you know you are adopted into his family and you are his child. Paul's letter to the Galatians 4:6-7 says "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir".

Even though the boys now always go to mum first, (possibly because she's a softer touch than I am), I remember when they were young and they fell off the swing or off their bikes, you would hear them calling out with tears "Daddy, Daddy". As a dad there's nothing that I wouldn't do to help my boys, because I'm their dad and I love them. And the Holy Spirit reminds us that we are God's dearly loved children. You know as I grew up, the concept of a Father God who loved me was always very hard to comprehend because my picture of a Dad was one who wasn't always there, who often was drunk, and in my view didn't care for me. But this Galatians 4 verse gives us a completely different picture of our heavenly Father who adopts us into his family. For all of you listening, no matter what your circumstances have been, you have a heavenly Father who loves you, he's adopted you and by his Spirit he will never abandon you.

Secondly the Holy Spirit reminds you of the truth he brings. Verse 16 of our reading, "he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth". The Holy Spirit reminds his children of truth. He will bring to our minds the truths of the gospel, and we so need that today in a world that tries to invade us with other information that is not truth. When we move to a place of despair, the Holy Spirit reminds us of the hope of the Gospel, he encourages us to search for the truth found in His Word and not what the world tries to make us believe. So for those with mental health issues, the Spirit of God wants to permeate your life with the hope of the truth he brings. For those facing worry, he wants to cover you with the truth that he will never leave you.

So remember that the Holy Spirit dwells within those who love him to be their help, he helps us reminding us that we are adopted and not abandoned, that he wants to speak truth into every situation.

And so the final point that I want to leave with us this morning, is about how he dwells in you.

### 3. Where does he live?

Remember the story - the disciples are panicking, Jesus is going to leave them. But Jesus says, "Don't let your hearts be troubled, because I am going to prepare a place for you". I know we didn't read it today but in verse 23 Jesus says, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them". So in verse 1 Jesus has said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled" because "My Father's house has many rooms and Jesus is going to prepare a place for us" and now in verse 23 he is saying that "I am making a home for me in you". Those two verses use the same Greek word for dwelling (monai) – so Jesus is preparing a home for you in heaven, and he is preparing a home for his Holy Spirit in your heart. Whether we are alive or dead, we are never apart from Jesus. He is always with us. In this life he has a home in you, and in death you have a home in him. That's why folks for those of you that have received the love of Jesus into your hearts, it's not about awaiting the glory that is to come, God has already made a home in you, and you can play a part in the work of his Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

Why should our hearts never be troubled, because Jesus has given us his helper, the Holy Spirit who lives in your heart, so every aspect of our lives can call on him. I think John 14 is so relevant for us today, it's not just a picture of what was promised to the disciples, it's for all of us that get into a panic. God is not a God who abandons us. He will not leave you on some far out place, a bit like me in the middle of Tuscany, panicking as I tried to break into my hire car. God by his Spirit dwells in you. He is reminding you of who you are and who you belong to. If today you don't know where to turn to then turn to Jesus. Because as you accept him, God who lavishes us with gifts, will make his home in you by his Spirit. And if today you already have given your life to Jesus, then it's time to be reminded of who dwells in you. Call on him to remind you of his peace whatever you face. Do not let your heart be troubled.

As a Church family, how thankful I am to know that God by his Spirit has sustained us along the way, he has been faithful, he has led us, and he has empowered us for the ministry in these days to reach out to a community that is alone, worried, and unsure of what the future will look like. We must therefore remain humbly dependent on the work of his Holy Spirit in the days ahead, listening, learning, being teachable, and shapeable and being attentive to his work as he guides us.