

Sermon for Online Service: Pott Shrigley 10 May 2020

John 14.1-14 *Trust in Jesus.*

The phone rings.

You pick it up and put it to your ear. And the kind but anxious voice at the other end says 'Don't worry, Madam ... BUT ...'

Your heart misses a beat, you freeze, for a moment time seems to stand still.

Why? Because such a statement is usually an overture to news you'd rather not be given.

I expect that most of us feel, at least in some ways, that life has stood still.

Life has changed and is changing dramatically. We are living in a new sort of 'normal' and plans are only just emerging about how we will go forward.

Archbishop Justin's advice to us is to have patience, positivity and to keep going under pressure. The 3 P's.

Today's gospel reading from John 14 begins in exactly the same sort of way as the phone call. Jesus says 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.'

When Jesus says 'Don't worry' I'm sure we're all ready to take our seats right at the front to find out why not.

What's the difficult news he's referring to?

Jesus has already warned his disciples that he'll only be with them for a short while longer.

Now he's trying to prepare them for what's going to happen to him and what will happen to them afterwards.

Welcome strategy as we know from current experience.

How gracious he is to the eleven disciples.

He's utterly self-possessed, despite what he's heading towards himself, and shows compassion for their distress. As always he puts others first.

Hopefully this is the sort of caring way we'd follow too if we knew we had to go away.

And, of course, the disciples are worried for good reason. They can see Jesus' heaviness of heart.

He has been betrayed by Judas and denied by Peter. He has been badly let down exactly when he needs their support.

But the disciples love their Lord and just don't want him to go.

I'm sure we can all relate to their sense of loss.

Despite everything Jesus tries to comfort his friends – and us - in four important ways.

The first is through faith and trust in him. There's no way round it. He says 'Trust in God, trust also in me!'

Trust is the antidote to fear, in whatever worrying situation we find ourselves. We should trust in a Lord who promised he would love us to the end. In a God we can neither see nor touch.

He tells us to trust him to prepare a place for us in his presence. He call's it 'his Father's house.'

We don't know where that will be or what it will be like but Jesus reassures us that there is room for all who love him.

Just like the Prodigal Son who was welcomed back to his father's house with open arms, we too will find unconditional love there.

The third reason to trust Jesus is the knowledge that Jesus prepares this place for us himself. He has gone before us and has secured it for each one of us through his death on the cross.

God has always gone before his people to prepare their place – he prepared the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve and the Promised Land for the Israelites.

Jesus does exactly the same for all who believe and trust in him.

Jesus fourth comfort is the promise that he'll come again. He doesn't say 'I'll send for you and I'll arrange a place for you.' He says he'll come in person.

Again we don't know exactly when but he promises that when it does happen we will be with him for ever.

Jesus tells his disciple Philip that his relationship with God his Father is so close that whoever has seen the Son has also seen the Father.

This is why he can assure the disciples that they will not be left abandoned. By following and trusting him they – and we – will reach that place of eternal hope. He says 'I am the Way, the truth and the life'.

At a time of concern and uncertainty Jesus offers us a message of huge comfort and of hope.

It is for us to trust his promises with excitement and a sense of purpose for our future.