

## A Commencement Address for Anxious Disciples

Luke 22:7-14

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for May 19, 2024

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Put yourselves in the place of Jesus' disciples for a moment. At this point in our study, the 12 followers don't realize how close they are to graduating from "disciple" to "apostle." As Jesus instructs two of the 12 to prepare the Passover, no one but Jesus knows how close He is to death. And so, as Jesus gives His final commencement instructions to the new leaders of the Christian church, He reminds them that it is Jesus' faithfulness, not their efforts, that will guarantee success in life. And the same is true for us.

The month of May is the traditional month for Commencement ceremonies in our country. This year, across our country, nearly 4 million high school students will graduate—there are going to be a lot of relieved parents, I'm sure—and there will be 2 million college and university graduates as well.

Commencement exercises date back to the Middle Ages, the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when graduation speeches were delivered in Latin.

They were formal, rather dignified ceremonies; I read that this past weekend, the commencement speaker for Duke University was comedian Jerry Seinfeld. That's a long way from Latin. Unless "Yada, yada, yada" means something in Latin!

Although it is the Hebrew noun, *yada*, for "knowledge," so maybe there was a connection, although I doubt it.

A commencement exercise includes traditional graduation attire. The graduation gowns go back to robes worn by the monks of the medieval period when the church basically ran all institutions. You may remember that a monk by the name of Martin Luther was converted to Christ while teaching the Book of Romans at the University of Wittenberg.

However, they wore their heavy woolen robes every day, not out of formality, but to keep warm. The hats, also, were worn for warmth.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the graduate also wore a cap, called a mortarboard. It was designed as a flat square, to mimic the mortarboard of a mason, who used it to hold his mortar as he built with bricks.

The graduation cap was intentionally designed to signify that knowledge had been built into the graduate's mind one course at a time.

And the word "course" was a bricklayer's term as well. We talk today about taking a course in world history, a course in geometry, but the word "course" was a bricklayer's term for that horizontal row of bricks; and one row or layer—one course—was built upon another until the project was completed.

So, the students have taken all their courses, the educational process is completed, and the graduate is built up and prepared for commencement.

The term commencement originally referred to a time of leaving one stage of life for a new career.

I couldn't help but think of this season as I arrived here in the narrative where the Lord is calling the disciples to the upper room and their final meal before the crucifixion.

It's been 3.5 years of university training, so to speak, and the disciples are nearly ready to leave this stage of life and enter a new career.

If you think about it: in 48 hours, Jesus will be in the tomb; in less than 8 weeks, Jesus will have ascended back to heaven, the church will have been created and these men will become—nearly overnight—leaders in the New Testament church.

The Upper Room is, in many respects, a commencement exercise for these men.

And the Lord is going to deliver a commencement address, so to speak, of incredible significance.

Luke's Gospel records some of it in one chapter, while John's Gospel devotes three chapters to the Lord's final address here in the upper room. We'll look at both Gospel accounts together.

***Turn with me to Luke's account; we're now in chapter 22 and we've arrived at verse 7, where Luke writes:***

*Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it."*

*Luke 22:7-8*

Keep in mind that the Passover season included the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a feast that would continue seven days beyond the Passover meal. So these terms are used interchangeably.

J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Zondervan, 1981), p. 415

Jesus is telling only Peter and John to go and prepare for their meal. This would involve getting a lamb and then standing in line at the temple, where priests would catch the blood of the lamb in a gold or silver basin and sprinkle the blood at the base of the altar.

David E. Garland, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 852

This signified the delivery of the Jewish people who sprinkled the blood of a lamb on their doorpost back in Egypt, just prior to being released from slavery.

After that, Peter and John would carry the lamb back and start roasting it on a spit; they would also purchase special vegetables and herbs and prepare a sauce for their bread as well as other elements for this special meal.

Now there's obviously an element of secrecy here. Jesus is only telling Peter and John to do this; they're the only ones who will know about this moment until later than night when Jesus arrives with the others.

More than likely this secrecy is because Judas is still among them.

If Jesus had let it be known where they were to eat this meal, Judas could have informed the Sanhedrin. They would have taken advantage of the privacy of this upper room and arrested Jesus and the meal would have never taken place.

Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume Two* (Crossway Books, 1989), p. 315

Everything that Jesus was going to deliver in His commencement address, so to speak, would have been interrupted.

Peter and John aren't even given an address, just in case they are overheard; but the Lord effectively gives them a secret sign.

**Notice verse 9:**

*They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you."*

*Luke 22:9-10a*

This is the sign, and by the way, this man will be easy to spot because women typically carried water in pitchers, balancing them on their heads, not the men.

Ibid

So, this man will be obvious; that water jar is the secret giveaway.

**Now verse 10, the latter part:**

*“Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.”*

*Luke 22:10b-12*

This anonymous man’s home, like many other homeowners in this day and time, would have been built with a large, upstairs room which could be accessed with stairways both inside the house and outside. This way they could rent the room and people could enter from the outside, and not disturb the family inside, and of course, this allowed for additional income as they rented out their upstairs room.

Bruce B. Barton, [Life Application Bible: Luke](#) (Tyndale, 1997), p. 493

Airbnb is not a new idea!

Tradition suggests this is the home of Mark, the young man who will eventually write the Gospel of Mark. The owner of this home would have been Mark’s father. He and the Lord evidently have already worked out this arrangement without anybody knowing.

And again, for the record, the name of this faithful and generous disciple is never given in Scripture.

Ralph Davis, in his new commentary, wrote of the unspoken contrast between Judas and this anonymous, generous, loyal disciple.

He wrote, “You have Judas, one of the premier disciples saying, ‘I have a price for Jesus!’ and you have this anonymous disciple saying, ‘I have a place for Jesus!’”

Dale Ralph Davis, [Luke: The Year of the Lord’s Favor](#) (Christian Focus, 2021), p. 162

Which is it for you today? Are you selling Him out or inviting Him in?

Peter and John follow the Lord’s directions to the letter, and **verse 13 tells us:**

*And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.*

*Luke 22:13-14*

This is another way of implying that Jesus was in total control. He wasn't panicking. He knows He will die the very next day, but He doesn't look like a frightened victim here, does He?

He was in perfect control of His destiny. He wasn't caught in the cruel drama of history. Yes, Satan was at work, but Jesus wasn't done in by Satan.

Hughes, p. 315

Jesus is running this operation; He's in control of the details, down to this address and this upper room where He's going to deliver a commencement address.

Now at this point in the narrative, Luke offers 24 verses on what Jesus will say to them, and John's Gospel gives us four chapters.

What I want to do is pull out some of the highlights from John's account; what Jesus has to say to them, He's also saying to you and me today.

I want to narrow our focus to **John chapter 14**.

If I could entitle the Lord's commencement address, at least at this point in the narrative, it would be something like, "How to Uproot Anxiety in your Heart."

**John writes John 14:1** that Jesus says to His disciples:

*"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 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? 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."*

*John 14:1-3*

I remember reading the Sunday comics in the newspaper years ago ... you remember newspapers? I don't really miss them, but I do miss the comic section. I could trust that section.

Of my favorites was where Charlie Brown announced to his little friends, "I have a new philosophy in life. From now on, I am only going to dread one day at a time."

It's easy to get to that place in life.

Keep in mind that Jesus might not have been panicking in the upper room, but the disciples aren't doing so well.

The wheels are beginning to come off their own plans. Anxiety was nipping at their heels and invading their hearts.

Jesus effectively gives them four truths to remember, and even though they will forget them in the next day, it will all come back and John will write it down.

Here's the first truth to remember that has the power to uproot anxiety in their hearts and ours today.

### **Jesus Christ is completely trustworthy.**

Here in verse 1 again, Jesus says:

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

*John 14:1*

The word for **“trouble”** means to be in turmoil—to be crippled by anxiety.

And by the way, Jesus is not giving suggestions here—these are commands in the original language.

You could literally translate this, *“Stop letting your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, keep on believing in Me.”*

Jesus knows His crucifixion is just around the corner. It's as if He's saying to them: “Keep trusting Me even though you don't understand what you are about to see happening to Me—keep on believing in me!”

Don't look around; look at me, Jesus says.

The truth is, we all struggle with anxious and difficult and painful times in life:

- Anxiety over some medical diagnosis.
- Anxiety over losing a job.
- Anxiety over a child who is running from God.
- Anxiety about a marriage on the verge of collapsing.
- Anxiety about financial needs.
- Anxiety about some change, about commencing from one chapter into something new and unknown.

Add to that all the troubles around you:

- The chaos of culture.
- The immorality of the majority.

Let me tell you, it's easy to start quoting Charlie Brown and begin dreading one day at a time.

What can you do?

Here's the compelling advice of the Lord Jesus, who is hours away from the cross of Calvary: keep preaching to yourself the truth of the gospel that Jesus Christ is completely trustworthy.

Now here's the second truth:

**Your home in heaven is a promised reality.**

Again, Jesus says in verse 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?"*

*John 14:2*

I have prepared a place for you, a place called heaven.

If you talk to people about heaven, you're going to get a variety of impressions—and a lot of it is confusing.

One honest 5-year-old girl was asked, "What is heaven like?" and she said, "I think heaven is going to be the happiest part of my dead life."

That doesn't sound very exciting!

Now the King James Version translated this verse, "*In my Father's House are many mansions.*"

And at first that sounds a lot more exciting. That translation has sparked a lot of imagination. But the more you think about it, the more discouraging it becomes.

It all falls into the category of "What kind of house am I going to get to live in if I behave?"

When I was a teenager, I remember hearing a preacher say that your good deeds were translated into building supplies that God was using to build your mansion.

I remember thinking, "I'm going to have to live in an outhouse; mine probably won't even have a roof!"

This word in the original language, is properly translated "rooms."

The truth is, every Christian has a room, a dwelling place, *inside* the Father's House.

Jesus isn't saying that if you're a good Christian, your house is 2 blocks away, but if you're a bad Christian, you won't even be in the same county.

No, we are all *inside*.

This was immediately understood in the Lord's generation because when a son married his bride, another wing was just added onto his father's house. When another son married, another wing was added.

Eventually the original dwelling would become a set of dwellings that enclosed a courtyard in the middle.

We will all have a place of residence under the same roof, as the bride of Christ, in the immediate presence of the Lord forever, in the Father's House!

Now here's the third truth to remember that will uproot anxiety in your heart and mind.

### **Your future is guaranteed permanently!**

Again, in verse 3 Jesus says:

*"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."*

*John 14:3*

You see, you're not just invited to a place, you're invited to a Person. Jesus says, "I'm going to be there, and you are going to be with Me."

This is a guarantee whether your faith is weak or strong, whether you have little faith or great faith, whether you have been a Christian for years, or you've just begun following Him.

You are on your way home! Death is merely the hand that opens the doorway into heaven.

About 100 years after the Lord ascended to heaven, the Greek scholar Aristides explained one of the reasons for the impact Christianity was having in the world, writing these words:

If any [Christian] passes from the world, they offer thanks to God and escort his body as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby.

Aristides, "The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher," Early Christian Writings, earlychristianwritings.com.

That's true. Death is another kind of commencement ceremony; you are leaving one chapter and entering an entirely new career.

Now here's one more truth to remember that will uproot anxiety:



## **Jesus Christ is your personal guide home.**

Jesus says to them here in verse 4:

*“And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”*

*John 14:4-5*

Don't you love Thomas? He's the only guy in class willing to ask the question they were all thinking.

“Wait a second! We don't know how to get to wherever you're going, in fact, Lord, we don't even know where *You're* going, so how in the world are we supposed to know how to get there?”

Great question Thomas!

The truth is, we're as bad off as Thomas; we're lost, and we need directions.

Many years ago, Billy Graham told the story of a time when he was a young preacher arriving in a small town for the first time. He wanted to mail a letter, so he stopped a young boy on the street and asked him for directions to the post office. After the boy gave him directions, Billy Graham thanked him and said, “Listen, if you'll come to church this evening, I'll be telling everyone how to get to heaven.” The boy thought for a second and then said, “No thanks mister, you don't even know how to get to the post office.”

Well, give us the directions to heaven!

### ***Listen to Jesus' profound answer here in verse 6:***

*Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

*John 14:6*

Imagine that you're traveling, and your GPS goes down. Your phone dies, you forgot your charger, and you must stop and get directions. You pull up at a little gas station and go inside.

The attendant tells you to go two blocks and turn left, then go three miles and turn right, and then at the second stop light turn left.

Well, you might get lost all over again!

But what if, instead of saying that, this attendant tells you that he's closing up the shop in five minutes and he'll be glad to just take you there himself.

In that case, he does not show you the way; he *becomes* the way.

That's what Jesus is saying here.

Jesus isn't telling Thomas and the other disciples that He will *show them* the way to heaven; He says here that *He is the way* to heaven.

Jesus isn't pointing to a cosmic map, saying "Go to this constellation and turn left and go to that galaxy and turn right," He *is* the cosmic map.

So, do you have an anxious heart today? Do you have unanswered questions today, fears, and doubts?

Of course you do. We all do.

Even after their university training, the apostles were anxious about the future.

This is God's word to them and to you today: you're not home yet; it might not be a very smooth voyage right now, but God has promised you a safe landing.

In the harbor of heaven, all your fears will be put to rest, and all your tears wiped away.

One day Jesus will call you to Himself—by death or at the rapture of the church. And that will be the day when you and I are finally home.

And if Jesus can guide you to heaven, He is able to guide you through life.

And what will that final commencement look like, that moment when you leave this chapter and begin your new, eternal career?

I wonder if we'll hear the ringing from a choir of bagpipes playing:

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see!*

John Newton, "Amazing Grace."

Or as one songwriter imagined it:

*Just think of stepping on shore  
And finding it heaven,  
Of taking a hand and finding it God's,*

*Of breathing new air and finding it celestial.  
Of waking up in glory and finding it home.*

Don Wyrzten, "Finally Home."

He will guide you home one day; He will also guide you through your life today.

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# Study Guide

## Sermon Summary

In Luke 22:7-14, we see Jesus preparing for the Passover meal with His disciples. This meal was not just a ritual; it was a profound moment of transition. Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover, a task that involved intricate preparations, including the sacrifice of a lamb and the gathering of specific elements for the meal. This preparation was done in secrecy, likely to prevent Judas from prematurely betraying Jesus and disrupting this crucial moment.

Jesus used this setting to deliver a message that would uproot the anxiety in the hearts of His disciples. He knew that His crucifixion was imminent, and He wanted to equip His disciples with truths that would sustain them through the coming trials.

The first truth Jesus imparted was His complete trustworthiness. Jesus commanded His disciples to trust Him, even when they did not understand what was about to happen. This trust is not a suggestion but a command, urging us to keep our focus on Jesus, especially in times of turmoil and uncertainty.

The second truth is the promised reality of our home in heaven. Jesus assured His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, a place with many rooms. Every believer has a place in this eternal dwelling, signifying our permanent and secure future with God.

The third truth is the guarantee of our future. Jesus promised that He would come again and take us to Himself, so that where He is, we may be also. This assurance is not dependent on the strength of our faith but on the faithfulness of Jesus.

The fourth truth is that Jesus is our personal guide home. Jesus doesn't merely point us in the right direction; He takes us there Himself. This truth uproots anxiety because it assures us that we are not navigating life's journey alone; Jesus is with us every step of the way.

## Key Takeaways:

1. **Jesus Christ is completely trustworthy.**
2. **Our home in heaven is a promised reality.**
3. **Our future is guaranteed permanently.**
4. **Jesus Christ is our personal guide home.**
5. **We can trust Jesus in the face of anxiety.**

## Discussion Guide

Bible Reading:

**Luke 22:7-8 | John 14:1-3 | John 14:6**

Observation Questions:

1. What specific instructions did Jesus give to Peter and John in Luke 22:7-8?
2. According to John 14:1-3, what does Jesus say about the condition of the disciples' hearts and the place He is preparing for them?
3. In John 14:6, how does Jesus describe Himself in relation to the way to the Father?

Interpretation Questions:

1. Why do you think Jesus chose Peter and John specifically to prepare the Passover meal in Luke 22:7-8?
2. What is the significance of Jesus telling His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled in John 14:1-3? How does this relate to the promise of preparing a place for them?
3. How does Jesus being "the way, the truth, and the life" in John 14:6 provide assurance and guidance to the disciples?

Application Questions:

1. Reflect on a time when you felt anxious about a significant transition in your life. How can the truths in John 14:1-3 help you find peace in similar situations?
2. Jesus commands us to trust Him even when we do not understand our circumstances. What is one specific area in your life where you need to practice this trust more fully?
3. Think about the promise of a home in heaven. How does this assurance of a secure and permanent future with God change the way you handle current trials and uncertainties?
4. Jesus is described as our personal guide home. Identify a situation where you feel lost or uncertain. How can you rely on Jesus to guide you through this specific challenge?
5. Jesus' statement in John 14:6 emphasizes that He is the only way to the Father. How can this truth shape your approach to sharing your faith with others this week?