



Easter 5

5/3/2026

John 14:1-11

Comfort for the Overwhelmed

"What's the point?" My father asked as he lay dying. That's the opening line to a book I've been reading recently. The author, a pastor, goes on to describe the final days of his dad. He had congestive heart failure, three kinds of cancer, emphysema, and a number of other painful illnesses going on all at the same time. It kept him from doing many of the things that made life meaningful, overwhelmed him by the fact that all of it was happening at once. Leading to the question: "What's the point?"

I wonder if the disciples would have been able to relate.

Today we travel back before Easter once again, to the Upper Room. Lots of things were happening at once. The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees had reached a fever pitch. Jesus kept talking about betrayal, and about leaving this world. They didn't completely understand what was going on, but they had an overwhelming sense of dread, a terrible feeling that things were out of whack. You can sense the panic in their voices as they bring their questions to Jesus in these verses. If their Lord was about to leave... what was the point?

The disciples were asking all those questions before the resurrection, before the crucifixion even. But as one of God's people 2000 years after the first holy week, do you find yourself completely confident and even keeled no matter what is happening? Or have you found yourself asking tough questions about God's plans too?

I think I know which way I lean. And why is that? What is it about feeling overwhelmed that can bring up so many difficult questions, or even throw us into a crisis of faith?

Maybe you could try to explain it this way. "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face." I don't think Mike Tyson was thinking about Christianity when he said that. But I really think you can apply those words to our lives as Christians. All of us love God's Word. It fills our hearts with joy, and there are times when it feels like things are clicking right into place. But when things don't go according to plan, when something happens that defies explanation and makes you feel completely overwhelmed... it can pose a challenge to your beliefs.

Maybe it happens when you feel overwhelmed by your own evil. A sin from your past that embarrasses you just thinking about it. Or maybe you are troubled by the same temptation over and over again. You think, "I know God is forgiving. But could he really forgive that? Does he really forgive me?"

Maybe it's when you are overwhelmed by evil in the world around you. There's shocking violence and hatred. And disturbingly common is the intense coldness of people around us, coldness that we see in broken families and selfish actions. Isn't there supposed to be a loving God in control of all this? Why does the world look this way?

Or maybe it's most common when life stops going according to plan. Suddenly your kid isn't doing well in school, and nothing seems to fix it. Distance forms in a friendship, and you don't know what to do about it.

Whatever it is, I'm sure all of this can think of things that make us feel overwhelmed, maybe even right now. It might make you start talking like the disciples: "Lord, which way? I don't know where to go! Is this really what the path to heaven is supposed to look like? I don't see the point in any of this!"

To see the answer to those doubts and questions, we need to look at how Jesus deals with his disciples in the Upper Room. Try to put yourself in the shoes of those men. The emotions in the room are running high, already they have a vague sense that things are not going according to their plan. And what does Jesus say? HIGHLIGHT v. 1.

Don't be afraid? How were they possibly supposed to listen to that! If you're upset about something and somebody tells you, "Chill out, it's not that big of a deal." How do you react? Not usually the most helpful thing to say! How can Jesus say that when they are in the middle of crisis mode?

Jesus, reading the uneasiness in the room, keeps going. HIGHLIGHT v. 4. You don't need to be afraid because the way to the Father is open to you. In fact, you already know the way to Him.

You can almost see the disciples looking at each other in confusion. Finally, Thomas says what all the rest of the men are thinking: "How? How do we know the way? We have no idea what you're talking about!" Listen again to Jesus' response. READ v. 6-7.

"Thomas," Jesus basically says, "I know how overwhelmed you feel. But you do already know the way. Because you know me. I know you have plenty of questions, that you want to understand exactly why all this is happening. Someday soon you will. But let me tell you something – when God's people start asking why? the Lord doesn't always give them the explanation that they're looking for. Instead he offers you something infinitely better. He offers Himself. He is about to offer me on the cross. He offers the Holy Spirit to dwell in your hearts. He offers his loving will for your

lives. You might not have the explanations you were looking for, but you already have me. And that means you have everything.”

That’s what those words meant for Thomas, and the rest of the disciples in the Upper Room. Would you like to know what those words mean for you?

They mean that through the faith God has given to you, you already know Jesus. That means you already know the beating heart of God’s love.

You already know the way to the Father, to an eternity in heaven. Because Jesus has given you Himself.

And you already know how the story ends. You know that Jesus died for you, and that death was not able to hold him down. You know that he rose again, that he went back to heaven to prepare a special place in his Father’s house for you, and for everyone you love. All of those things have already happened, they are facts of history. And so just like you are absolutely confident that Jesus died and rose for you, you can be absolutely confident that he is coming back. For you.

Sin is forgiven. Death is conquered. There’s a place in heaven reserved for you. Nothing, NOTHING will ever take away what Jesus has done for you.

May that gospel certainty change the way you see the challenges and tragedies of life in this world. You may not know the answer to your every question, but you know that you have a God that loves you. That is a Light that shines in dark places when all other lights go out.

And it reminds me of something that I read once. As a kid, my favorite book was *The Lord of the Rings*. My grandpa and I read the whole series together, which is probably why I remember it so well. Towards the end of the books, two of the characters are reaching the end of a terribly dangerous quest. They are in place called Mordor – basically hell on earth – and they are beginning to think they will never return home. But in the darkness, one of the characters named Sam is still able to find hope. Here’s what it says: “In the West the night-sky was still dim and pale. There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark [peak] high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.”

A star beyond the Shadow’s reach. It’s a beautiful picture, partly because it isn’t just true in fairy tales. It’s true for you.

As we walk through our lives in this world, it can be very dark at times. The shadows are long. The path forward does not always seem clear to us – at least not from our human perspective. But your salvation is beyond the Shadow’s reach. It remains true and certain no matter what you experience or feel. Because your salvation is tied to your Savior, who is not only watching over you, but is walking with you on every step of the journey home.

So, in this sin darkened world, do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid.

Be a bold witness. Point others to Jesus, the only one who drives away the darkness of our hearts, without fear of judgment or rejection. Because even if every relationship you’ve ever had fell apart because you were sharing the gospel with people, it would not change the Lord’s love for you.

When hardship or tragedy come, remember you have a Savior that death could not defeat. Your eternity is certain because his victory is certain.

When you feel overwhelmed by the confusion of a life not going according to plan, remember that you have the One who IS the way and the truth and the life. Through Christ, you are already on the road that leads home.

Remember that quote we heard a few minutes ago? [put on screen] That’s not the end of the story. He spoke those words to a dear Christian friend, and the friend reminded him that he was still on earth for a purpose, even in the midst of his suffering. That Jesus was patient under even greater suffering for us. And that heaven was waiting for him on the other side of all these awful experiences. God used that friend to strengthen the man’s faith, and did not abandon him in the middle of darkness and doubt. God will not abandon you either. He has prepared a place just for you. And through his Word he will continue to drive away the darkness, the evil, and the sin until one day he will hold you in his arms forever. Amen.