



*Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled*

Acts 7:55-60, I Peter 2:2-10, John 14:1-14

May 14th, 2017 - 5th Sunday of Easter

First Federated Church, Peoria, Illinois

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Text:

*Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. (Jesus)*

Let not your heart be troubled.

There are a lot of things that can trouble our heart; graduations and the question of “What’s next?” As the youngest or last leaves the home there is the “empty nest” as a husband and wife look at each other and silently ask, “Who are you?” For too many years the family’s life has revolved around the children’s schedule; getting them to practice or to a game and a contest or a dance lesson or any number of things. And then there is the uncertainty of our jobs with a global economy and technology making more and more jobs obsolete. We ask ourselves, “Where can I have a career that cannot be outsourced?” Let me give you a hint; plumbing. We will always need plumbers!

And no matter how old our children are, we constantly worry about them and our grandchildren until there comes a day or role reversal when they begin to worry about us—which we do not much like. We may have troubled hearts as we think about issues of health or retirement or just what the future will bring.

We may not know what the future holds but we do know who holds the future.

Believe in God, believe also in me. Believe. Trust. Have Faith in the understanding that there is a place for you that God has a purpose for you. You are not an accident, no matter what anyone may have told you. You are special to God. You are so special that God knows the number of hairs on your head. Now, for some of you that is easier to count than for others, but still, God knows you as no one else knows you.

But how can we be sure? Because Jesus taught us how precious we are in the sight of God. Jesus showed us the Way, a new Way. The earliest followers of Jesus were called People of the Way because they lived life differently than others lived. They lived by a different set of values.

And do you know why? Because they knew who they were; a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who belong not to themselves but to God. The letter

of I Peter reminded them of this identity. The writer reminded them who they were both individually and as a people, a church, a community of faith.

Trusting in this belief the first Christian martyr, Stephen was able to be faithful unto death.

There is a brass plaque on a wall in the fellowship hall of First Presbyterian Church in Burlington, Iowa. Above the plaque is a picture of a Chinese family at the turn of the 20th century. They are dressed in their Sunday best; a father, mother and five children. The man in the picture is Tien Yeng. When he was a child the children of the Sunday school department in Burlington collected their offering each week and sent it to the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Society in order to support Tien Yeng in his education. He went through elementary school and high school and university before going to seminary and becoming a Presbyterian minister.

When Tien Yeng learned that the church in Burlington was building a new building he sent them a Chinese dollar bill, equivalent to one month's salary, along with a letter saying that if he could but buy one brick of the new building he would feel as if he had begun to repay the children of the church the debt that he owed them. The members of the church had two windows commissioned. One window was a representation of the front of the dollar bill and the other was the back of the bill. The windows stood at opposite ends of the fellowship hall. Today, if you go into the church nurse you will see one of the windows. You can tell that it is the window because across the middle of it you will see a bamboo shoot.

During the Boxer Rebellion in China, a time when Boxer nationalist wanted to rid the land of all foreign influence including Christian missionaries, Tien Yeng and his family were arrested and told to renounce their faith. When they refused the Boxers took them to a field on the outskirts of what is now Beijing. There they beheaded each member of the family, beginning with Tien Yeng's wife so that she would be spared the sight of the death of each of her children. Tien Yeng was permitted to have a whispered word and prayer with each member of his family; first his wife and then each child, from the youngest to the oldest before he faced his own martyr's death. Tien Yeng faced death confident of God's faithfulness that goes beyond this life.

Remember who you are, or more importantly Whose you are. Let not your heart be troubled. No matter what happens in life, walk in the Jesus Way and know what real Truth is. Experience real Life; life in God's Eternal Love that will never ever let you go. Amen.