



THE NEW SHOFAR

Jesus was God spelling himself out in language humanity could understand. C S Lewis

Easter 4

Men and women of faith have hope in God as our Shepherd

Here is the problem:

“Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me” is what Jesus said to his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. Not difficult to see why he would feel the need to encourage them in this say.

Jesus has spoken of betrayal and death (13:21-30), and anyway, he has himself been *troubled in spirit* (13:21). Judas is, as he is speaking, in the midst of betrayal (13:30). The disciples can easily imagine danger lurking in the shadows—not only for Jesus, but for themselves as well.

To add to that bonfire, Jesus has said, *I will be with you a little while longer.... Where I am going, you can't come* (13:33). For disciples who have left everything to follow Jesus, it must be terribly disorienting to hear Jesus say that he is leaving them. What on earth does that mean for their daily living? How will they survive?

Here is the solution:

Believe in God. Believe also in me. Although facing the prospect of death, Jesus does not focus on his own troubles, but instead comforts his disciples. His counsel to them in the face of pending disaster is faith—Believe in God. Believe also in me.

Believe in God, believe in me is not about a creed. It begins with acknowledging God and acknowledging that Jesus is the Son of God but then moves to taking up a way of life that is built on that knowledge and gives witness to its truth. Without a way of living to back it, faith means nothing and will transform nothing in our world. A faith that is not reflected by a way of life is false and undermines God's work.

Interestingly, these two Greek verbs used can be translated in four different ways and each of them is worth pondering for the variations in meaning they can offer us:

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| • You <i>do</i> believe in God (a fact). | Believe also in me (a command)! |
| • You <i>do</i> believe in God (a fact). | You <i>do</i> believe in me (a fact). |
| • Believe in God (a command)! | You <i>do</i> believe in me (a fact)! |
| • Believe in God (a command)! | Believe also in me (a command)! |

Jesus acknowledges the disciples' fear without validate it. Instead of making their fear the focus, Jesus calls them to faith. He makes no promise to remove fear from them or to destroy those things causing them to fear. Importantly, what he does is call the disciples to believe. They are to believe, not because of the dark spot they find themselves in but to

believe in spite of it. To put it in biblical language, *to be assured of things hoped for—to be convicted of things not seen* (**Hebrews 11:1**). This means something like: *in faith, the things we hoped for are already being realized*. This is the same kind of faith that led Abram to follow God without knowing his destination (**Hebrews 11:8-12**). God blessed Abram's faith by making him the father of a great nation—Israel—the people of God. His faith became the reality from which we all emerged in faith.

Jesus will bless the disciples' faith—a faith not yet fully present at this table of the Last Supper—by bringing forth from them the church—the new Israel—the people of God.

This is the faith to which they are called by Jesus

Jesus calls the disciples to believe, not only in God, but also in himself. Why should they do that? Because he is the Son of God. There is no better reason!

We know from our own experiences that while we can be told not to worry that does not stop us worrying. We worry anyway! However, it is when we obey Jesus' counsel to *believe in God and Jesus*, that our worries lose their power. Part of our believing means we live knowing that *all things work together for good for those who love God*" (**Romans 8:28**) With Christ as our Saviour, what have we to fear? *If God is for us, what does it matter who is against us?* (**Romans 8:31**). That kind of faith triumphs over fear.

In my Father's house are many homes

The phrase, *in my Father's house* is talking about a lot more than "heaven." It is about relationships. The person who has a loving relationship with his or her father enjoys privileges in our own earthly father's houses that are denied to most people. Think of all of the great and wonderful things that are ours in our home (as opposed to when we stay in a motel room) – security, love, warmth, comfort, love, belonging...Jesus is at home in his Father's house, and that is what he promises we will share with him. The *many mansions* has the sense of *there is much love*. In the midst of that divine love we have a home awaiting us.

It has answered half of the problems distressing the apostles. Thomas raises the obvious problem: if you leave us, how do we get there?

I AM the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE

Jesus is "**the Way**." He does not merely point out the directions but truly and completely is for us, the Way. To be at one with Jesus, to build our lives on him, to imitate him is to find the Father. Finding God depends on our "being as Jesus" in the world around us.

Jesus is "**the Truth**." The truth sets us free (8:32). That is, by looking at life through the "Jesus lens", we see and understand the reality of our human existence and our future as God sees it.

He is "**the life**." As Jesus conquered the grave, so to, in (our relationship with) him we too have life and know what it is to be fully alive, fully human. Experience hope. Know peace.

In his high priestly prayer, he says, ***This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ (17:3).***