

Holy Trinity Sunningdale
Sunday 3 May, 2026 – 5th Sunday of Easter – 10.00am
Calming Words for Troubled Hearts
Readings – Acts 7:55-end & John 14:1-14

As he was being stoned, Stephen saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand. The religious leaders stoned Stephen to death for blasphemy without a trial. Like Jesus, Stephen prayed for forgiveness for those who killed him.

In John's Gospel, the disciples were upset, fearful and their hearts were deeply troubled as they gathered in the Upper Room with Jesus. Jesus had been talking about leaving them and this struck terror into their hearts. Jesus encourages his disciples with a number of truths that would be vital to their peace of mind, which they need to carry the mission Jesus has entrusted them with to the world.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled," Jesus says to his disciples. He continues, "You believe in God, believe also in me!" The disciples have faith in an invisible God whom they have never seen, and Jesus is asking them to continue believing in him when he is no longer visible. The disciples need to make the conscious choice that in the troubles that lie ahead they must place their trust in their heavenly Father and in Jesus Christ.

Stephen's heart was not troubled as he faced death by stoning. Why? Because he believed in God and he believed in Jesus. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Verse 56 – "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Another reason Jesus says we should not let our hearts be troubled is because we have a home in heaven – he goes to prepare a place for us and he will come back to take us to be with him. When life caves in, and troubles surround us, we can find comfort and rest for our troubled hearts in the fact that there is an eternal home specially prepared for us. Not only is Christ preparing heaven for us, but he promised that he will come and take us there!

Thomas does not understand and asks the question that probably all the disciples are thinking, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" What Thomas means is, "If we do not know the destination, how can we know the way."

Jesus responds with one of the seven "I Am" statements in John's Gospel, "I am the way and the truth and the life." What I hear Jesus saying is that he is the way to God, he reveals the truth about God and he gives life with God – life everlasting!

Stephen definitely knew Jesus as the way to God. Stephen understood and spoke of Jesus as the truth about God. Stephen received the life with God – eternal life, given by Jesus.

In January 2004, I made a decision to upturn my life and relocated to the UK to support my teenage daughter who was finding life challenging. I promised my dad I would return for his birthday in December. I arrived in Nigeria on Christmas Eve and

at the airport got the message that my dad had been taken to hospital. I went straight to the hospital and found him in a coma. In church on Christmas day, people asked about my dad and I was telling them how he is in a coma in hospital. A lady walked up to me and said, "Your dad is waiting for you. He is in a coma but he can hear you. Go and tell him you have arrived and he can go home to be with Jesus." I left church with about 5 others for the hospital. We worshipped, sang and prayed for about an hour. Then I sat on the bed cradling my dad's head and started talking. I told him how I have arrived to be with him but more importantly, how his wife – who died 3 years earlier was waiting in heaven for him and how Jesus has come with his angels to take him to his eternal home. His breathing changed and with some gasps he was gone.

It has been said and I believe that 3 of the times Jesus comes to believers include

1. At conversion or at baptism when we invite him into our lives.
2. At daily prayer – when we ask him to indwell us.
3. At the point of our death, when he comes to take us home.

When we cannot change the circumstances life throws at us, let us remember that the remedy for a troubled heart is rest in the assurance of a relationship with Christ – who is the way, the truth and the life. Amen

Dolapo Ogunbawo