

## Confident in Hope, Tim Keller

### [00:00:01.970] - Speaker 2

John chapter 14, verses one through three.

<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.”

This is the word of the Lord.

### [00:00:38.000] - Speaker 1

Christians want to represent Jesus Christ to the world and Redeemer people want to represent Jesus Christ to their city. And on the night before Jesus died, he gave his disciples this long, intensive training session. John chapter 13 to 17 is the longest piece of teaching we have in the Bible from Jesus. And that's exactly what he was doing. He was getting them ready to represent him in the world. And that's why we're studying it this year. And when we get to John 14, which we just have done, now we are just entering into the chapter 14. The chapter 14 starts at the beginning with this, *I don't want you to be troubled. Don't let your heart be troubled.* It ends, by the way, John 14 ends, saying, *I don't want your heart to be troubled or afraid.* Now, why is Jesus in chapter 14 saying, I want to give you something so that your hearts aren't constantly troubled and afraid? And the answer is, because trouble comes. John 16:33, we're going to get to it later; in John 16:33, Jesus says, “In this world you will have trouble.” There it is. So, because you're going to have trouble all the time, I want to give you something so that your hearts are not troubled all the time by the trouble.

### [00:02:02.380] - Speaker 1

I want to give you something that will give you confidence and strength so that the normal trouble that life gives you is not going to overthrow you. Now, what is it that Jesus does to give us this confidence and strength so we can face life as it is? And the answer is, he actually gives you a few things. That's why we're going to have a series of sermons on John 14. But in these first three verses, he gives us one of the things without which you cannot face life in an untroubled way. And that is, he says, *I go to prepare a place for you.* The first thing he gives us to help us deal with the troubles of life is the knowledge of a place. In fact, let me tell you what he's going to tell you here in verses one through three. He's going to say, I want to talk to you about home. I want to talk to you about heaven, and I want to talk to you about hell. See, when he says, I'm going to prepare a place for you twice, he says, I'm going to prepare a place for you.

### [00:03:01.570] - Speaker 1

That's home. There's a real home I'm preparing for you. Secondly, it's in heaven. It's in my Father's house. It's there right now. But thirdly, the road to it is through hell. Let's take a look at this: home,

heaven, hell. He's going to tell us, if you understand this, your hearts don't have to be troubled when you face the troubles of life. So, first of all, what do we mean by home? Well, the word place, he says, in my Father's house, there are many rooms, and I'm preparing a place for you there. I'm preparing a place for you, a home. Let's think about the power of the idea of home. You know, in the movie 'Up', remember, it's how it starts. Carl Fredrickson refuses to sell his home, and there's all these big high rises going up all around, and they're offering him zillions of dollars, and he refuses to sell it. Actually, it's a cartoon, but he represents thousands of people every year who create such headaches for developers and for governments. It's the reason why they have all kinds of rules. I've got a son who's an urban planner. He says there's all these laws in which governments and developers can actually kind of force people to sell their land or their home, because generally it doesn't matter how much you offer them, millions and millions of dollars.

**[00:04:31.980] - Speaker 1**

They're set for life, but they won't sell. Why? This is my home. This is my place. Why is that so powerful? Why is it, by the way, that homelessness for both adults and children is so uniquely, psychologically devastating? I'm not talking about the hunger that goes with homelessness. I'm not even talking about the bad health that comes from exposure to the elements. No, they say it's homelessness itself that is devastating. Paul Tornier, who was a Swiss counselor and doctor years ago, wrote a book called 'A Place for You' based on these verses. And he actually said that children who do not have a good sense, that they ever had a home, they have no good memory of a place where they were completely safe and completely loved, a great home; children who've not experienced home, a safe home, he says, develop an inability to attach, a restlessness, an inability to settle down and attach that goes with them throughout life. Why is homelessness so wounding? Why is home so powerful? One of the best movies with the simplest plots you could ever see in your life is the 1985 movie, A Trip to Bountiful, with Geraldine Page, for which she won the Academy Award, by the way.

**[00:06:01.100] - Speaker 1**

And it's simply a story about a woman named Carrie Watts, old woman who's living with her husband, with her son and daughter-in-law in a little apartment in Houston. And she thinks about Bountiful, which was the town on the gulf, a little rural town on the gulf coast of Texas where she grew up. And she decides things will be better if I can get back to Bountiful and the whole movie... ..Here's the plot. First, she finds out there are no trains that go to Bountiful anymore, so she can't use a train. Then she finds out there are no busses that go to Bountiful anymore. Then she finds out there's no post office there anymore and she can't even send a letter. So, finally, she kind of runs away and finds a way to get a bus to a town and then finds somebody who would drive her over there. And finally, she gets to Bountiful and there's nobody there. The person she's hoping to visit and live with, even the last person living in Bountiful, died. And she goes and she sits down on the porch of her ruined home where she grew up and her son finally comes and finds her.

**[00:07:01.120] - Speaker 1**

And she looks around and he takes her back to Houston. That's the plot. And the reason it's such a great movie is it gets at something that's hard to describe. We have a longing for home that is so powerful. And even those of us who have got memories of a great home, the memories always exceed how good the place really was. And that you can never, not only can't go home, but the fact is there's nothing on earth that actually satisfies the desire for home. There is no earthly home that can satisfy our desire for home. Because home isn't just a house. Home is a place where everything fits. Where things suit you, where you're accepted, where you belong, where you come as you are; always. Where you don't have to put on a face and you don't have to adopt a role. It's a place of deep rest. It's a place of deep well-being and peace. It's harbor. It's home. Now, Jesus Christ knows that the men that he is talking to are apostles. You know what the word apostle means? Sent out. That's what the word means. And he knows that every single one of them is going to start to wander.

### **[00:08:28.120] - Speaker 1**

They're going to wander. They're never going home again. And they're going to be wandering just ahead of danger. And eventually all but one of them is going to die a horrible death. They're going to be thrown to wild animals, know sawn in half and things like that. Except one, the author of this epistle of this gospel, John the apostle, who died in exile away from home. And what is he going to do that'll enable them to go into that kind of life untroubled? Untroubled! And here's what he says. He says, even if you had a wonderful home with a big fire and a window looking at the mountains or the sea, that would never satisfy your longings with home. But this will. I'm going to prepare that place for you right now and doesn't say, we're going to get back this, he doesn't say, and if you live a good enough life, maybe I'll let you come to my home. My place. No, he says, I'm going to prepare your place right now. If you're a disciple of mine, you've got that place, the place you've been longing for all your life. It's there, it's reserved, it's guaranteed.

### **[00:09:35.760] - Speaker 1**

I've got it ready for you. And you can live your life knowing, oh, don't worry so much about, oh, I don't have a home. Well, here's your home. And no home here would ever satisfy what you're looking for anyway. And when you get there, you're going to say what that character said at the end of the Narnia Chronicles. I've come home at last. I belong here. This is the country I was looking for all my life, though I never knew it. By the way, did this work? Jesus Christ is getting these guys ready for terrible. The rest of their lives are going to be terrible. And he says, I'm going to give you something that will enable you to be able to face life untroubled. Did it work? Yes, of course it worked. The knowledge that there really is a place for you and Jesus has it in his keeping. Now. Secondly, where is this place? And the answer is, it's heaven. Now, the reason why we say that is the word doesn't come up here, but he says, my Father's house has many rooms in it, and I'm preparing a place for you there now.

### **[00:10:41.650] - Speaker 1**

The Father's house exists. Now, where is it? It's with the Father, our heavenly Father. And exists now. He says, I'm going to it now. So, he's not talking about just something in the future, though, of course we get to it in the future. It's something that exists right now, and that's heaven. Actually, we learn two things about it. One is, it's heaven. It's the Father's house. But two, is it's a place of love. Because he doesn't just say, I want you to go to heaven, and I'll be traveling every so often. I'll see you there. Oh, no. What makes it heaven is that you may be with me where I am. So, what he's telling us two things about this home. It's heaven, and it's a world of love. Because that's what makes a home. A home is the love. So, first of all, what do you mean by heaven? Well, it means when you die, you go to know, this passage is read. In fact, I don't think I've ever done a funeral without reading this passage. This passage is read at funerals, and it should be. And what Jesus Christ is saying here is, I don't just want you to be untroubled at the prospect of my death.

### **[00:11:52.530] - Speaker 1**

I want you to be untroubled at the prospect of your death. And that's one of the great things I give to my disciples, be able to not be afraid of death. See, Jesus is saying this. If you are my disciple, and this is a guaranteed thing. He doesn't say, well, at the end of your... We'll get back to this. At the end of your... Know, if you've lived a good enough life, I might let you come to my... No, no. He says, if you're my disciple, the minute you believe in me, I've got your place ready for you. It's guaranteed! It's there and it's in heaven. So, it means when you die, here's the thing. The worst thing that can happen to you on this earth is actually the best thing, the darkest thing that could happen to you, which means get killed or you die, will make you. The darkest thing that could happen is actually the most brilliant thing. This is why the great Chicago preacher Dwight Moody, when he was dying, once said or wrote, he says sooner, pretty soon, you're going to read the newspapers that Dwight moody is dead. Don't believe it.

### **[00:12:59.630] - Speaker 1**

I'll be more alive than I've ever been. See, what Jesus is saying here is that when you die, you do not leave the light and go into the darkness. No, you leave this relatively dark world and go into the real world of light and love. The great poet George Herbert. What a line. He says, death used to be an executioner, but the gospel makes him just a gardener. You see? What does a gardener do? Takes seeds, plants, these little seeds, but then they become flowers, little seeds, and it becomes fruit. And see, all death can do to a Christian is make you infinitely greater than you are now, infinitely greater than you are now. Now, this particular promise is one of the main benefits of being a Christian and one of the main things that differentiates Christians from the people in the rest of the world. And we actually don't talk about it enough in churches, I don't think, anymore. Why not? Well, look, if you don't understand the gospel, you don't believe the gospel. Then how do you look at death? I guess there's only two possible ways, though. I'm sure they break into subdivisions.

**[00:14:18.030] - Speaker 1**

You either can believe in an afterlife or you don't. So, there's some people who say, well, after death, I believe there's something. I believe there's an afterlife. But, of course, you're going to be nervous. Why? Because you don't know what it's like. See, apart from what Jesus is telling us, you don't know what it's like, or you're not sure your afterlife is going to be a good one. I must tell you as a minister, over the years, having gone to hospitals and gone to places and talked to people who knew they were dying many, many times, unless you're a doctor, you probably don't see more. You don't talk to more dying people who know they're dying than ministers. And I just know that when they start to get closer to. When you start getting closer to death, even if you believe in an afterlife, you'll look back at your life and say, I haven't lived the life I should have lived. You know you haven't. And so, you do not come up to death with a good feeling at all. If you believe it in afterlife, you're not sure you're good enough to have a good afterlife.

**[00:15:26.540] - Speaker 1**

Or let's say you don't believe it in afterlife. That's the other possibility. If you don't believe in afterlife, say, well, after life, that's it, you're just gone. You're just nothing. Well, some people put it this way. Some people find that very upsetting because you lose yourself, you lose love. Other people. No, no, it's perfectly natural. But you're not happy about it. See, Rousseau said, any man who says he doesn't face death with dread is a liar. A liar. Well, now I want you to know that from a Christian point of view, Rousseau is 20% right, because 1 Corinthians 15 says, death is an enemy. And Genesis 3 shows us that we were not built for death, but it came in afterwards because we turned away from God. And what that certainly means is Dylan Thomas is right, we should rage against the dying of the light. It's not right. We know it's not right. We're not made for this. And therefore, if death is an enemy, and if we're not made for this, of course, to some degree, when you face death, you're going to feel sick in your stomach, and you should, but it's only 20% because a Christian does not face death with threat, or you don't have to, nor even just the indifference.

**[00:16:53.940] - Speaker 1**

The best I see out there is people say, well, when you die, that's it. And so, then you won't know anything. That's indifference. But Jesus says, no, no, that's going to trouble you too. Let not your heart be troubled, because when you go through that dark door of death, you come into a world of love. See, nobody else understands it that way. Go on to the Internet and find Jonathan Edwards' sermon 'Heaven is a World of Love'. It's not an easy sermon to read. It's so incredibly rational. But it is wonderful if you're willing to be patient with it. Because he starts off right by saying, well, what is heaven? He says, well, think about what makes any place great. It's love. He says, stop thinking about thrones and harps. Maybe there's thrones and harps and streets paved with gold. Forget that stuff, he says. Is that what makes a home? A home? Heck, no. There's plenty of castles and places in the world where there's thrones and harps and maybe even cobblestones paved with gold doesn't make it a home. What makes a home a home is love. And uniquely Christians believe in a triune God, a God who in one God has had three persons from all eternity knowing, loving each other.

**[00:18:14.660] - Speaker 1**

And this is what Edward says. Bear with the slightly older English. Listen to what he says about heaven. He says, God is one of three persons who, quote, are united, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are united in infinitely dear and incomprehensible mutual love. They are then an eternal mutual holy energy. There is then an eternal mutual holy energy between the Father and the Son, a pure, holy act whereby the deity becomes nothing but an infinite and unchangeable act of love. He goes on to say, pouring love into one another in degrees of unimaginable joy and power makes God this three in one God into, quote, a fountain of love. So, what makes heaven a home? Why does the Bible say, doesn't say, heaven's a stadium where God addresses us, or even an auditorium where you hear God preach to us. Heaven is a home where you get God's embrace. And Edwards goes on and says, in heaven, this fountain of love is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it. So, it overflows in streams and rivers of love and delight enough for all to drink at and to swim in, yea, so as to overflow the world, as it were, with a deluge of love.

**[00:19:31.730] - Speaker 1**

We cannot imagine how our joy and our glory will multiply exponentially forever with inconceivable heart. Heaven's a world of love. *I want you to be with me where I am.* Jesus says, not, I want you to go to this great place. It's got great views and it's got a throne and it's got gold and it's got harps. He says, I want you to be with me. So, heaven is a world of love, and that's the reason why. Oh, my goodness. Look, you can say I believe in an afterlife, but I don't know whether I'm good enough for a good afterlife. Or you can say, I don't believe in an afterlife. I think when you die, that's just it, or you have the way to. St. Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 15 *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* The Christian taunts death. Do you see that? Paul is not just peaceful in the face of death; he's making fun of it. The Christian attitude toward death is like that. Here's something else you can find online. George Herbert a dialog anthem George Herbert did a poem. We often print it in the bulletin at Easter.

**[00:20:45.800] - Speaker 1**

George Herbert wrote a dialog anthem means a poem which is basically a dialog between death and a Christian, and it's based on 1 Corinthians 15 *Oh, death, where is thy sting?* I love reading it. It won't be that hard for you to tell who's the Christian and who's death. Listen:

Alas, poor death, where is thy glory?  
Where is thy famous force, thy ancient sting?  
Alas, poor mortal, void of story.  
Go and see and read how I have killed thy king.  
Poor death, and who was hurt thereby?  
Thy curse being laid on him makes thee accursed.  
Let losers talk, yet thou shalt die.  
These arms shall crush thee, spare not, do thy worst.

I shall be one day better than before.

Thou so much worse, that thou shalt be no more.

Don't you love that? Here's death says to the Christian, you loser, I'm going to get you. And Christian says, spare not, do thy worst. You will only make me better than before. And you will be so much worse that you will soon be no more. That's a taunt. Do you have anything like that in your life? You know, the older you get, the more you're going to see.

### **[00:22:12.960] - Speaker 1**

People go down, loved ones go down, family members go down, people your age go down. That's an interesting experience. Not so much when you're in your twenties and more in your thirties and more in your forties and more in your 50s than on and on. Have you got this in your heart or are you troubled? Okay, lastly, but here's the most important thing. Yes, there's a home, and yes, it's in heaven, but the road to it is through hell. Not for you, though, because what Jesus says is, twice I go to prepare a place for you. It's so easy to read this, forgetting the context, which is the night before he's about to die, and forget what he's saying. He's not just saying, I'm going to prepare. Just a minute. I'm going to just pop over to heaven and get your bed ready. When he says I go, what does he mean? I'm going and what is he talking about? I'm going to the cross. I'm going to the cross. I'm going to die for you. That's what it means when he says I'm going. And that's the reason why he doesn't say, if you live a good enough life, maybe I'll let you come and stay with me in my place.

### **[00:23:23.380] - Speaker 1**

No, he says, I'm going to secure a place for you. I'm going to secure a place for you. Now, why does Jesus have to die to do that? I'll tell you why. Adam and Eve, what was their punishment? Adam and Eve turned away from God, said, we want to be our own saviors. We want to be our own lords. We're going to be our own masters. Turn away from God. What was their punishment? What was the greatest punishment? Homelessness. They were cast out right of their home. You said that was terrible. That's terrible. Well, yes, but it's also perfectly just. In fact, it's even natural. You know why? The wages of sin is loneliness. Do you not know that about yourself, the more selfish you are, the more proud you are, the more sinful you are, the more alienated you are from other people. That's just natural. The more you sin, the more it tends to push you away from people and push people away from you. And therefore, the natural consequence, the natural and right punishment for sin is homelessness, is loneliness. And that's what Jesus took. Jesus says, *Foxes have holes, birds have nests. The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.* He was a wanderer. And when he died, he was crucified outside the gate, outside his home. And was he embraced by the Father? No. He said, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He took the exile. We deserve the homelessness we deserve, so that we could get a home, so we could be brought in. And, of course, we still die. We do still die. And you say, well, that's still pretty hard. And that's why Russo was right 20%. We still see it coming up. But the difference is, of course, we know that he really bore the real weight of death, the real separation. Now death only means reunion, not really separation. You know, this story, that is kind of too hard to not keep using because I can't think of a better one. Donald Ray Barnhouse. Who? Preacher at 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia for a number of

years, on his way to his wife's funeral with his children. Supposedly, he was in the car, and he was trying to talk to his children, who were not that old yet, about death and about the Christian view of death.

**[00:26:05.570] - Speaker 1**

And at one point, he looked over, because he was driving, and he looked over, and he says to his son, we just passed through the shadow of that truck next to us. They passed by a truck, and he says, would you rather pass through the shadow of the truck? Would you rather be hit by the shadow of the truck, or would you rather be hit by the truck? And his son said, I'd rather be hit by the shadow of the truck. He says, well, he said, Jesus Christ was really hit by the truck. He really experienced what death is all about. The homelessness, you know. And now when we die. When your mom died, she just experienced the shadow of the truck because she's with God and she's with everyone. Let me just finish like this. When Jesus says, don't let your heart be troubled because of what I'm telling you about suffering, and what I'm telling you about death, and what I'm telling you about heaven, don't be troubled. In some ways, what he's saying is, I'm giving you a watchtower. Now, a watchtower was something that you would put people up in to see the lay of the land.

**[00:27:16.240] - Speaker 1**

And let's just say you're up in the watchtower and there was a battle going on in the city below you. And if you were down in the city, it would look really bad. But up in the watchtower, you see reinforcements coming and you realize we're going to win. And Jesus is basically saying, I want you every so often you're down here, and it just looks terrible; every so often I want you to read John, chapter 14, verse one, two, and three. And get up in that watchtower and realize it's going to be fine. I remember that one of the very first people I actually, in a sense, pastored into death was an older woman. I was 24 years old. I had just taken this church in Virginia, and she was dying. And she was an older woman in my congregation. And she'd had a terrible life. She'd had children die on her. She'd had, evidently, I was told she had an abusive, tyrannical husband. But she had a wonderful attitude. She taught me, because when I talked about all the things that had happened wrong, people had abused her. And she says, well, you know, God knows what people will deserve someday.

**[00:28:21.690] - Speaker 1**

He will judge the earth. And if those people need, they deserve something, that's God's job. And I would talk about the suffering she'd been through. Well, you know, God's going to come and take me, and he's going to make everything right. And someday he's going to make the whole world right. It was like she would get up in that tower, and she was telling me, come on. Come on up. The air is fine up here. You're all as bothered, young man. Come on up here. It's really good. And I do remember when, just the day before she died, she actually had a collapse. And I went to the hospital, and she was on the respirator. It's a horrible thing there. And her eyes were closed, and I couldn't tell whether she could hear me. But her face looked terrible. She was all frowning and seemed to be in a lot of pain. And I do remember I sat



down next to her and I read her. I said, "Alice, listen." And I read her John, chapter 14, one, two, and three. *Don't let your heart be troubled. Don't let it be afraid. I go to prepare a place for you.*

**[00:29:19.030] - Speaker 1**

*So, you'll be with me where I am.* And the frown went away, and she nodded. Her eyes never opened. And I think what I did was I just helped her back up in the tower and she was able to die peacefully. Have you got that tower? Do you know what it's like to get up there? And don't forget, since Jesus says, what makes heaven heaven is I'll be there. Don't you realize that even now, to a great degree, Jesus is saying, have fellowship with me. Know, my love. I am your shelter from the stormy blast and your eternal home. So, the more you are able to know him, the more you get up in that tower and you realize everything's going to be all right. Don't let your heart be troubled.

Let's pray. Our Father, we just are meditating on something that is supposed to be a great, great comfort to us. And it is. But we pray, Lord, in the midst of a lot of suffering and death and trouble, that you would teach us how to take medicine to get this vantage point to remember all these promises so that we, too, would live our life in confidence and strength and not let the troubles trouble us. So, we pray, Lord, that you would enable us to do that and make yourself real to us now, as we participate in your supper, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.