

John 14:1-6

Nemo resideo...”leave no one behind.” This is within the creed of the U.S. Army Rangers and is, in fact, the policy of all branches of our military. While in the field of battle, those in uniform who fall can have the hopeful expectation that their comrades will not leave them to the enemy but will return to them and bring them home.

When Jesus spoke the words of our text, His disciples would soon be entering the field of battle. It was the eve of His crucifixion. A horde with swords and clubs was on its way led by the devil himself. Trouble was coming. Spiritual warfare. And Jesus’ disciples would all fall in the field of battle, for one after another, they would fall away from Jesus.

But how comforting and reassuring that, even before the battle begins, Jesus tells them, “*Let not your hearts be troubled.*” He would not leave His disciples to the enemy. He would return to them and bring them home.

You and I are, at this very moment, in the field of battle. We are presently engaged with the enemy. Against whom do we fight? Listen to the Apostle Paul, “*We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but... against the spiritual forces of evil.*” There is no horde with swords and clubs coming for us. Much worse, the demonic horde has set itself against us. This horde has allies. The sinful world around us and the sinful flesh within us.

Now, there is a way to avoid war and make peace with the enemy. It is really very simple. Deny what Jesus says in our text. “*I am the way,*” He says, “*and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” These are fighting words, for the enemy has sworn to fight to the death anyone who holds to them and confesses them. The world, because it is an ally of the demonic horde, also hates these words of Jesus. No religion, says the world, can make such exclusive claims for itself. All religions are equally valid in the eyes of the world.

What do we say to all this? Do you know what other Christians are saying? A recent survey shows that more than half of the Christians here in America deny that Jesus is the only way to eternal life. He is one way, they say, but not the only way. These Christians, if we can even call them that, have chosen to make peace with the enemy.

What about you? What do you say about Jesus? If we go the way of the world, which is where most Christians have gone, denying Jesus’ exclusive claim to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we may make peace with the enemy, but we will have no peace with God, but will be at war with Him.

We truly are in the field of battle, and so often we fall. Here in God’s house we confess Jesus Christ, and Him alone, as the Savior of sinners. But out there our actions can tell a different story. Speaking for myself, if I truly believe that Jesus is the one and only way, then why do I so easily depart from Him and go my own way in life? So quickly I fall in the field of battle by falling away from Jesus and from the truth of His words.

If you are like me in this, then hear what Jesus says, “*Let not your hearts be troubled.*” Jesus sees how we fall while in battle, and He knows that so often it is our own fault. Yet even before

we entered the field of battle, when we were baptized, Jesus' promise to you was that He would never forsake you. He would never leave you to the enemy. He would return to you, lift you up, forgiving you, and bring you back home.

For this very reason Jesus surrendered Himself to the enemy. He let the enemy do its worst to Him on the cross so that He would be the Savior of the nations. Jesus defeated the enemy for you, and so He can come to you keeping His promise.

All your life you will be in the field of battle. And not a single day will go by when you and I do not fall in one way or another. "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*" You wear the uniform of your baptism. Jesus sees you as one of His own. However many times you have fallen, Jesus has forgiven you. His mercy toward you will never run out.

As you exit this church building today, look up on the hillside where many of Jesus' disciples are buried. They, too, engaged with the enemy in the field of battle. Some of them for many years. Jesus always returned to them, and this is how they prevailed. And they died believing that Jesus would return one more time to raise up their fallen ashes and bring them home that, as He promises, "*where I am, you may be also.*"

Every promise Jesus gave to them is also for you. We are not stronger than the enemy, defeated though he is. We are not able to survive the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*" Jesus is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. He is this for you. He has never yet left you to the enemy. He has always returned to forgive you and bring you back to Himself. *Nemo resideo* ("leave no one behind"). These words are written within Jesus' heart. Believe them, they are there for you. Amen.