

Follow the Way to God's Comfort

 ***Trouble-free mansions*** (vv.1-4)

 ***Life in the Father*** (vv.5-11)

 ***Greater fruits of faith*** (v.12)

In the name of Jesus, God's "Way," dearly redeemed children of the heavenly Father:

Karl Marx was not the first intellectual to suggest that "religion is the opiate of the people." Stalin insisted that religion was a crutch and killed millions trying to eradicate it from the former Soviet Union. Hitler used liberal Lutheranism in particular to help launch his Third Reich, but then commanded his storm troopers to banish pity from their hearts when he sent them across the border into Poland. Especially in our day of instant communication and broadband entertainment, it's a wonder anyone would give up worldly pleasures and deny the lusts of his heart. In fact, it's a miracle that anyone would **Follow the Way to God's Comfort**. Truth be told, even the most religious want to sing like the old crooner, "I did it my way." And whenever that fails, we feel the need to worry. If "religion is the opiate," anxiety is the "meth lab." And it takes a miracle of God's grace to break our addiction to this sin of selfish worry.

 ***Trouble-free mansions*** (vv.1-4)

Given our weakness for the easy life, God has to take us into the depths of despair to show us His loving care. It would have been so easy for Jesus to avoid the cross only a few hours after our text. Weeks before Thomas had resigned himself to returning to Judea for raising Lazarus from the dead. Since the Jews had already tried to stone Jesus to death, with pessimistic resignation Thomas "***said to the rest of the disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'***" (John 11:16) Jesus knew very well that neither Thomas nor the highly self-confident Peter would stick around long enough to die with Him. They would all ignore His warnings and flee the scene of His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. None but John along with the women would witness His death on the cross. Instead of avoiding the depths, Jesus accompanies them down. He is preparing to bring them up again before they drown in despair.

That's what you and I need to think about when a troublesome diagnosis like cancer comes along. It makes you feel like a bug in the bathtub when someone suddenly opens the drain. The whirlpool of events keeps spinning like a deadly go-round that's that anything but merry. No way to jump off or swim free. Life is out of control. Don't look down; death is there. Don't look sideways; the current is too strong. Look up; God's is waiting and watching so that you can **Follow the Way to God's Comfort**.

God's Comfort gives hope. Maybe today or tomorrow instant gratification will come God's way "***in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.***" Every moldy home will be destroyed. Every ache and pain, every disease and anxiety will cease "***when the perishable [body] has been clothed with the imperishable.***" (1 Corinthians 15:52f) "***Sorrow and sighing will flee away***" (Isaiah 35:10) like the wake of a boat. Listen. Our Savior says, "***Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 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. You know the way to the place where I am going.***"

Jesus is not preparing a big apartment in the sky. The Greek original seems better translated like the old King James Version: "***In my Father's house are many mansions...***" Wide open wonderful places have already been prepared and are waiting for us by virtue of Jesus' death and resurrection. To the cross and the grave Jesus went to prepare our place with God in heaven. Leaving heartache behind, we **Follow the Way to God's Comfort in Trouble-free mansions**. All we need to know is "***the way.***"

Life in the Father (vv.5-11)

You may remember Philip as the Missourian from the “Show-Me State.” Early in Jesus’ ministry, Philip had told a Nazareth-debunking Nathaniel to “*come and see*” Jesus. (John 1:46) Now Philip wants Jesus to show and tell: “*Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.*” It’s easy to fall into the Philip-mindset. Just let yourself trust your own eyes and heart instead of God’s Word. You’ll quickly find out why most people fail at contests like *Fear-Factor*. We want to trust our own way, but when we get there we find we have neither the courage nor the skill nor the strength to hang on to victory.

An incident from my teen years comes to mind. If you have little children, sometime rent *The Apple Dumpling Gang*. Near the end of the movie a fire wagon plunges through some fierce rapids. Years ago my brothers and I with our Dad and a friend tried to shoot that same treacherous stretch in the Deschutes River of Central Oregon about thirty miles south and west of Bend. Downriver from the Wickiup Reservoir, the movie crew had local friends of my Grandfather’s hired man rigging cables for *The Apple Dumpling Gang*. All we had was a rubber raft, very little experience, and people yelling at us from the shoreline to get out. When the current proved too much for our friend with whitewater experience, we were forced to evacuate onto a log where our raft was pinned. As soon as the last of us got out, the current snatched the large raft and pulled it underwater. I’ve never seen anything like it. We had to hike nearly half a mile downstream before finding it in the backwaters, minus our gear.

With so much danger and death on earth, how can people actually expect to choose their own way to heaven? Maybe the next time one of your friends or classmates makes that comment, you should be ready to say, “Get over it. Not going to happen.” “What do you mean?” they’ll ask. Answer: “If you want life with God, you have to go to the Father through Jesus who says, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.*” Parents of soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country don’t want someone trashing or ignoring their family sacrifice. Why should God be any different? His Son lived and died to demonstrate God’s love by rescuing us from hell. Jesus’ power-works showed His Father’s tireless energy on our behalf. Stubborn sin goes its own way. Repent and **Follow Jesus, the Way to God’s Comfort** for wonderful **Life in the Father**. Get ready for...

Greater fruits of faith (v.12)

Our awesome Savior says, “*I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*” “*Greater things than*” healing the sick and raising the dead? Yes, even right here enjoying New Life in Shoreview, Minnesota, USA. Next week in a special presentation we will hear more about God’s Gospel Achievements bringing His **Comfort** in “*greater things*” than the ministry of our Lord which stayed so close to the place of His birth. “*Even greater things than these*” God is working in us as we steadily increase our support for synod missions and worker training. Over \$100,000 from the WELS explored our mission in Shoreview/Vadnais Heights, but our local offerings are doing double duty now in Wyoming, Minnesota. Through Mount Olive Chinese Church, New Life sermons are beaming to mainland China via our website. Strong support continues for New Life students at Christian day schools and pastor/teacher preparatory schools. Member inreach is intensifying to reclaim inactive members. Adult/Teen Bible classes, Catechism, Bible Information Classes for prospective members shine God’s Word to change hearts and lives by the Gospel. Needy assistance, District Mission Board service, membership in the St. Croix Lutheran High School Association will soon be joined by Early Childhood Ministry. These are not mere “programs” to make us feel good. God is using us to gain others with the “*greater power-works*” of calling sin-dead souls out of the darkness into God’s wonderful light.

Some rulers want power. Some churches settle for drug programs. We see far **Greater fruits of faith** springing up like flowers. God’s garden relieves our anxiety to **Follow the Way to God’s Comfort** in Christ alone. Americans can have their idols. I’m grateful for **Trouble-free mansions, Life with the Father** and **Greater fruits of faith** than even His Son produced. God’s awesome love is bringing more souls to His salvation through New Life. Let’s keep praising Him, now and forever. Amen.