

**Detail:**

5-10-20 Sermon "No Trouble in My Heart"

*"Well, ya got trouble my friends, right here in River City. With a capital T and that rhymes with P and that stands for pool."*

I always knew when I was in trouble with my mom because she called me by my full name - Jay Dee -

not initials, but J-A-Y D-E-E (my folks apparently had a strange sense of humor). Anyway, when I heard my full name, I knew there was trouble.

When I was a senior in high school the school musical was "The Music Man." Several of my friends from band -

I was a band geek - decided they were going to try out for the musical so I decided I would too.

My singing experience was limited to our small church choir where almost everything we sang was done in unison, but I thought I might get a part in the chorus or something and it would give me a way to hang out with friends without taking too much time or being too much of a commitment. Well, leading up to auditions a bunch of us gathered in one of the small band practice rooms and learned a verse of some song we could use for the try out. I was always a fan of the crooners, you know, the Frank Sinatras and Dean Martins of the world, and there was one guy who appeared regularly on Johnny Carson's Tonight Show that I liked - Anthony Newley - some of you may remember him.

He was a singer and actor who famously sang a song that I thought I could sing, and that seemed appropriate to what I was doing, titled "What Kind of Fool Am I?"

So that was my song and I learned the first verse.

On the day of tryouts, the director, Mr. Taylor, the head of the music department, sat in the back of the darkened auditorium while the stage was flooded with light.

Each person auditioning came out to center stage and sang their song, the director would cut them off at some point in the first verse, thank them, and then they exited - end of tryout. Well, when my turn came I took my place, the accompaniment began, and I sang my song...

What kind of fool am I

who never fell in love,

it seems that I'm the only one,

that I have been thinking of,

what kind of man is this?

An empty shell?

A lonely cell in which,

an empty heart must dwell.

Well, the director never cut me off, and not hearing a cut off, the accompanist kept playing.

Now mind you, I had only learned that one verse.

What was I going to do? What can you do?  
I just kept singing, making up the words as I went.

And I think the clincher for me was that my made-up lyrics rhymed. I pulled it off, whatever "it" was.

Mr. Taylor cut me off somewhere mid verse - and then there was just this looming silence hanging over the auditorium. I stood there looking out into the darkness, not yet having been dismissed, when Taylor's baritone voice boomed out from the back, "Anderson? Is that you?"

Well, when the casting was done I went to the music department bulletin board to see if I had gotten a part.

I started at the bottom where the chorus was listed to see if I was listed there. Nope - my hopes sank a little.

I scanned up the page, seeing all of my friends' names in various places, and then next to "Barbershop Quartet" I saw my name, my full-oh-you-are-in-trouble-now-name, Jay Dee Anderson, with a slash and another friend's name, David Wilson, right next to mine.

What did that mean? I was splitting a part in the quartet with David? Cool! David had played the lead in “You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown” the year before.

But then I thought, if he’s in the quartet, then who got the lead? I scanned the rest of the way up the list and, whoa, there was my name again, once again next to David’s: “Professor Harold Hill: Jay Dee Anderson/David Wilson” Holy Cow! I had been cast in the lead role of Harold Hill? And this just made me wonder all the more, “what kind of fool was I?” and, more importantly, what kind of trouble had I brought upon myself?

I’ve had that lingering question at other times in my life as well, as I’m sure you have. Any time we’re faced with a major decision in life that question hangs over us as we consider our options; this school or that school, this major or that major, to enter into a relationship, to join this group or this club, to buy this car, or this house, to take this job or the other, all of these decisions can trouble us if we let them.

In our Gospel reading from John for today we find ourselves in what is called Jesus’ Farewell Discourse, what we might think of as the “long goodbye.”

John, unlike the other Gospel writers, devotes over ¼ of his Gospel to Jesus’ last night. This is where he has Jesus explaining everything, answering the disciples’ questions, and giving all of those last minute instructions to them - like a parent leaving their son or daughter at college for the first time - making sure they know how to handle all of the things they’ve never handled on their own before, and hoping that they’ll just stay out of trouble.

*“Don’t let your hearts be troubled,”* Jesus tells them, *“You have trust in God; have trust in me as well.”*

Some translations say, “You *believe* in God, *believe* in me,” or “You have *faith* in God; have *faith* in me as well.” The word translated as *trust*, *belief*, and *faith* are all the same word, but it is the idea of *trust* that Jesus is truly getting at here. He’s not suggesting to them that they should believe in or give mental assent to some kind of doctrinal or dogmatic statement about him, he’s saying, “you’ve seen me, you’ve listened to me, you’ve been a part what God has done through me - trust in that, trust in me.” But the disciples, they just can’t help themselves.

A little context. It’s the night before Jesus’ crucifixion - the disciples don’t realize that but Jesus does.

He’s trying to brace them, to prepare them for that, for what’s about to transpire. In fact, after their last supper together, just before our passage today, Jesus had told them that one of them would betray him another would deny him, and that he would be killed. And it’s in this context that he then tells them, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled.” And we can understand their response, we can almost hear their collective voices exclaim, “What?”

Are you kidding me? Don’t let your hearts be troubled! Are you nuts? You just told us you’re going to die and you want us to not let our hearts be troubled?”

We know this feeling don’t we? We’ve felt this feeling, when we’re deeply disturbed, when we’ve found ourselves mired in waves of anguish, despair and the fear of uncertainty. Perhaps it came with a diagnosis, yours or a loved one’s. Maybe it came in the mail, when a bill arrived or a bank statement came that showed how much the

current economic crisis had devastated your savings or your retirement account. Or perhaps it came in a call from a friend, a letter from your employer, or an announcement on the news that reported a death, a layoff, or some other event that troubled you immensely. We've all been there. We've all felt those feelings.

For those disciples who had hitched their wagon to Jesus as the military messiah who would raise an army and overcome Rome's oppressing empire, they must have been singing the same song I auditioned with, "What Kind of Fool Am I?" For those who thought Jesus would be this great, authoritative priest who was going to become the Chief Priest of the Temple and overthrow the spirit-crushing rules of the Pharisees, they had to have been swimming in all manner of doubt. In fact, some of that doubt is shared in the midst of their confusion, but still, Jesus responds to them, asking them not only to believe in him - to believe what they've seen, but to trust him, to trust in him, to commit their futures to him.

And no sooner does Jesus put that out there for them than he completely changes directions and begins talking about going away, preparing places for them, and coming back. And in doing so he implies that they should know, they should understand - in the midst of the shock and grief with which they were just blindsided - that they should understand what he's talking about, that they know how to follow, the way to follow. And it's Thomas who puts the question back on Jesus, "Actually, Jesus, we don't know where you're going, how could we know the way?" And this is where, once again, we find the disciples doing our dirty work for us. It is here that they reveal to the reader that they have the same questions, the same doubts, the same fears that we do in the face of unknowing, of uncertainty, of fear.

And another of us, Philip, after Jesus says he is the way and again asks us to trust him...well, here's how David Lose describes it, "Philip can stand it no longer and asks the one question no faithful Jew should ever ask. Actually, it's a statement, a request, a plea, maybe even a demand, but underneath it all is a question: 'Show us the Father,' Philip says, 'and we will be satisfied.' Or, to put it more directly, 'What does God look like?'"

[11](#)And I can imagine, as that question settled on the group, that the feeling was not unlike that of standing on a stage, waiting in silence, for a voice to call out from the darkness of an auditorium. "In ancient Israel..." Lose point out, "it was simply understood that no one can see God and live. Moses, the model of heroic faith in the Old Testament, once made a similar request, and God put him face-forward in the cleft of a mountain and passed by and all Moses could see was the glory of the Lord shimmering around him. He was finally allowed to turn around and look only after God has passed by, so that Moses ultimately saw only the trail of the Lord's glory or, more literally in the Hebrew, Moses could only see God's backside."[12](#)

Philip wants a physical description, a literal description of what God looks like, of God's physical appearance, while Jesus is offering a "likeness," if you will, telling them that "God is like what I've shown you; the things you've seen me do, the healing, resurrecting Lazarus, feeding thousands from a sack lunch, turning water into wine, all of that was not me - it was God working **through** and **in** me. When you've seen me you've seen God, you've seen what God was like."

God alone, he seems to be saying to them, is too much for you to bear. God is bigger than you think, even bigger than your **ability** to think. God's love is bigger than you can love. "God is too holy, too powerful, too infinite, too full of potential and life and the future for any mere mortal to behold and live. And yet," Lose points out, "Philip asks

to see God anyway. 'If you want us to trust you, Jesus, just show us the Father.'”

Oooh, you got trouble, my friend, you got trouble right here in David's City...

It's a totally inappropriate question. But we all want to ask it, one way or another, because we've all been there, desperately hoping that things will get better, that the tragedy or trouble we're facing is not all there is.

Maybe it was when the doctor told you that the cancer had returned. Or when a loved one died unexpectedly.

Or when the stewardship appeal went sour.

Or when you discovered your beloved has left you.

Or after one more miscarriage, or when the Twin Towers fell, or the flood waters rose, or this, or that.

Maybe it's not when something happened, but in wondering when something will happen; when will the other shoe drop, as they say, when will the virus go away, when will there be a vaccine, when will we return to work, to school, to worship, to “normal?”

We've all had times like these disciples, we just wanted some reassurance, some glimmer of hope, that all would be okay, that all that we had heard and learned about God is not just some fairy tale, some false story, but is true. “Just show us God,” we plead, “and we'll be satisfied.” To which Jesus responds, not in frustration but in a love that is deeper and wider that we can even begin to comprehend, to Philip and to us, “Have I been with you all this time and yet you still don't know me? Whoever has seen me has seen God.”



“Which,” as the commentator so eloquently remind us, “takes us back to the very beginning of John's gospel actually, when John, after singing his hymn about the Word that was from the beginning, the Word that is with God and is God, the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us that we might have life.... After all this, John closes his hymn to the Word by saying, ‘No one has seen God. But the only begotten Son, who rests in the very bosom of the Father, he has made him known.’

And there it is -- the two truths of the life of faith.

First, no one has seen God. And it's hard, sometimes crushingly hard, to believe, to trust, to keep faith in and with a God no one can see. And yet the second truth: Jesus, the Son, the Word made flesh, if you've seen him you have seen God and so know what God looks like and, more importantly, what God is up to and who God is for.”<sup>[3]</sup>

This all takes place on the eve of the crucifixion, in Jesus' final hours. Soon he will be betrayed, abandoned, handed over, tried, beaten, and nailed to a cross to die. But why? Why did this happen? To take on himself the just punishment that we deserve? No, I don't believe that. To set for us an example of what real faith looks like? No, not really. To appease the righteous anger of a just God. Not at all! No, Jesus goes to the cross for one reason and one reason only: to show us that nothing can separate us from God's love, grace, and mercy; to show us how much God loves us, that God will not abandon us even in the midst of the deepest kinds of trouble that we face, and to show us how far God will go to let us know how much we're loved, so that we might trust in God, trust in God's love, and believing, have life, even abundant life, by trusting in Jesus - through whom we have seen the God who is love.

So, ya got trouble, my friends? Well, you can bring your questions, your worries, your doubts and your fears to the God made known to us in Jesus, because this God didn't even let death hold Jesus down. Because this God is big enough for your questions, big enough for your fears, big enough for your doubts; this God can handle and even wants them, wants you to offer them up. And this God wants to then remind you that, when you are at your wits end, when your blood pressure is through the roof, when your heart is racing, when your anxiety is about to overcome you, remember to look to Jesus, the one who not only preached but, more importantly, modeled God's unconditional and limitless love to all, who in Jesus healed the sick, lifted the lame, restored sight to the blind, and conquered death so that even the grave cannot lay claim to us. Because what you see in Jesus, this is what God looks like, this is who and what God is: love, perfect love, for you, for them, for all of us and for the entire world.

The psalmist tells us to *entrust our spirit into God's hands*. When we can trust God enough to do that, as the hymn says,

*Nothing can trouble,  
nothing can frighten.  
Those who seek God  
shall never go wanting.  
Nothing can trouble,  
nothing can frighten.  
God alone, fills us.[4]*  
Amen.

<sup>[1]</sup> David Lose, [workingpreacher.org](http://workingpreacher.org), commentary on John 1:1-14, accessed May 4, 2020

<sup>[2]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[3]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[4]</sup> “Nothing Can Trouble,” by Jacques Berthier, *Faith We Sing* songbook, copyright 2000, pg 2054.