

## SERMON 5 EASTER- 5/14/17

It is the fifth Sunday of Easter, and again we are faced with scripture that is a little confusing with a lot going on. We are listening to Jesus talking with his disciples **before** the crucifixion. This chapter of John is considered to be part of Jesus' Farewell discourse. Karoline Lewis, a frequent contributor for *The Working Preacher* website writes "It should seem just a little odd, or feel like an itching burr under our liturgical saddles, that a chapter in which Jesus offers his formal good-byes to the disciples is heard in the Sundays after Easter, when he is, well, for lack of a better term, back." What's up with that?

Many of the commentaries tell us that we see Jesus again gathered with his disciples to let them know that the resurrection is not the final word. He knows that he will soon be gone from their physical sight for the time is coming when he will ascend to the eternal kingdom from whence he came.

Now I'm willing to bet that in the grand scheme of things, Jesus did not have to appear on earth to be among them again, but appear he does. Bearing the love and compassion of God, he comes, that they might see that the promise is real, and let them know the journey is not over.

How very confused and frightened must these followers have been? Jesus first calls them from their homes, work and families. Then they spend three years walking the countryside and at times the walk was on water, witnessing miraculous healings, eating with sinners and talking with strangers many of whom were not Jewish. Then he is nailed to a cross and dies. Really dies. Now he appears as the resurrected Christ, and tells them he is going again.

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.’

How many of us have set off on a trip not having a clue exactly where we are going and found ourselves hopelessly lost? When our trip companion asks us to stop at the next gas station for directions we **flat out refuse**. We find that we would rather bumble around hopelessly lost than admit that we can’t do it ourselves, that we are lost and we need help.

Then Thomas said to Jesus, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? This seems to be the point when the disciples know that

after all this time they have no idea what is happening or about to happen. They are beyond being hopelessly lost. They do not know where their Lord is going. They do not know where they are going and they **certainly** don't know how to get there. It's time to ask for directions. 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus answered him, **'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'** Jesus, the heart of God, stands before them and beckons them to trust, believe, and follow him. To follow all they have experienced with him. He tells them to believe that no matter whether they can see him or not they should be assured that they are alive in him, in one another and in the Father. They are not without him **ever**. Even though he may disappear from their sight he goes to prepare a place for them in God's eternal kingdom. When their journey is done he will return and take them to himself, where they will see and be with their living, loving God, face to face. Jesus then says to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." Their journeys continue.

Now that the disciples are cared for, for the time being, what does this mean for us on the fifth Sunday of Easter a mere 2000 thousand years later? What are we to be doing while we wait for Jesus to come for us at our journey's end?

My best guess is that we are willing to continue on, hopelessly lost, without asking for directions, believing we can do it on our own. It really is **much easier** that way. Do we really want to hear the guy at the gas station, whose name just happens to be Jesus, say "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life?** If we stop and ask Jesus for directions he may send us to places that **WE DO NOT WANT TO GO.** For us as, Christians the only way to the Father is Jesus Christ, but what if He asks us to leave the doors of our hearts open to the unchurched, the struggling believers, or to understand and respect those of different faiths who struggle to serve a loving God but don't believe that Jesus is the only way to do that? What if his directions send us to talk to strangers or eat with sinners, or to give comfort to the sick and the dying? What if his directions send us to reach out to those who struggle daily with addiction, what if he asks us to reach out and touch **any** of these people and the **so many others** who struggle, truly hopelessly lost, with the truth of his unending, life giving unconditional love? **This** is what this morning's gospel wants us to hear. This is what we are meant to do until our Journey's end when Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior comes to take us to the place he has prepared for

us in the presence of God our Father. A place he bought for us with his life, given with the free gift us his love Given to us. We are not meant to be hopelessly lost. We **are** meant to bear Christ's love, wear Christ's love and give Christ's love to all. Can any one of us do this on our own? I know I can't. Do not be afraid, believe, trust, and follow. Our journey is not over. I think it's time to ask for directions.

Amen