

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God believe also in me. I use this passage for funerals quite a bit. I choose it because of the words that come later – In my Father's house's there are many dwelling places. That's from the New Revised Standard Version translation. The New International Version says many rooms. Those words help families who have lost a loved one know that God has them in God's care, that God has prepared a place for them in God's house. It helps give them a sense of what heaven - that place beyond this life - might be.

However, as I start to say the words at the beginning of this passage – Do not let your hearts be troubled - to those who are gathered to mourn their loved one, I ask myself how can I say those words to the family and friends of those who have just lost someone they dearly love?

How could Jesus say those words to the disciples – Do not let your hearts be troubled when he had just told them that he is going to leave them and that they cannot follow. Their beloved teacher, the one who they thought was the Messiah, the one who was going to change their world, free them from the Roman occupation and usher in a kingdom of peace was leaving them and as far as they could see was leaving them without doing any of what they expected. They must have been reeling in shock, anxiety and fear.

How can we hear these words of the Gospel in the midst of a pandemic – Do not let your hearts be troubled - with so many dead, with health and other essential workers working in scary conditions, a quarantine that goes on and on, jobs and businesses lost and so much more? Of course our hearts are going to be troubled! How could they not be?

And yet there they are – Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. Jesus goes on to talk about his father's house. He is reassuring the disciples. There is so much room in my father's house and a place is being prepared for you and you know the way. They know the way? Thomas speaks up – Lord we do not know where you are going how can we know the way. Jesus says then says - I am the way and the truth and the life.

Jesus was right. Thomas knew the way. The disciples knew the way and we too gathered here in this online community know the way. We know the way because we are hearing Jesus' words that he is the way and the truth and the life. We know the way because we know Jesus. I think we all get confused when Jesus tells us we know the way, because we define "the way" ourselves.

The disciples' "way" was that of the Messiah they expected – the one who was going to change their world, free them from the Roman occupation and usher in a kingdom of

peace. With all this talk about Jesus leaving them, his most likely arrest and Judas having left to betray didn't make any sense for "the way" they had in their minds.

The "way" that I think about is how are we going to find our way out of this disaster. What's the plan? When can we see our current quarantine lifted even just a bit? End of June? July? When can we gather in church and how is that going to look? When can I go to the dentist to get my broken tooth fixed? When can I go back to the gym? That's the way I would like defined. That's the way I think will be the answer to not letting my heart be troubled. But I don't think that is the way Jesus is talking about. In the end, my way isn't the one that is truly going to satisfy my heart. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. In Jesus' way, he is ever by our side. To know the way, we must start with Jesus. That is how we will find our way.

For the disciples, it meant coming to grips with the way Jesus was their Messiah – one that died on the cross and rose again and sent them out to teach others about the way he taught us to live. It was a way they could never have imagined and they found their way by staying with Jesus, by staying in community, by loving one another and sharing God's love in their teaching and preaching.

How will we come to grips with the way Jesus places before us in this time? We start with Jesus - knowing Jesus is already leading us in his way. We pause in Jesus' presence. We pray. We read scripture. We stay in contact with our faith community. I know for that for me, I need to intentionally stop and think about how Jesus is already leading me in his way and let go of "the way" I have in my mind.

When I pause to do that, this is what I discover. I see Jesus' way in front of me. I see how strong our congregation is as we continue to worship now including those who were not able to make it to church or those who moved far away. I see it in our confirmation class in their ideas as they get ready to offer the sermon on Pentecost Sunday. I see it at our pantry as volunteers pick up food, sort food, pre-bag food and then give it out. I see it as the surrounding community joins in whether it is food or money or hands to help. I find it in the conversations I have with parishioners. Usually, when I see people at church, we only get a chance for a brief check in. Now while it is not weekly, the conversations are deeper and I feel more connected. *I see it in my prayer life as Jesus continues to break in even as I struggle to keep my usual prayer practices going.*

What is the way Jesus is laying out before you? Can you let go of the way you want to follow and see what Jesus is offering you? It may not look like the way you had expected. It may not be a way you ever thought of going but is the way that will bring us to true life. A place has been prepared. A way has been made. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. Trust that you know the way. See where Jesus is leading you.