

Easter 5 Sermon, May 10, 2020
I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, John 14:1-14

These words from the Gospel of John are so often read at funerals that it seems odd not to have a casket and flowers. These words are used to assure the family and friends of the deceased that the deceased is in a better place, a place assured from the day of their baptism. These are words of encouragement but they are not so much about our life after death but about our life after Jesus' death. It is about how we will live together as believers, in light of the reality that Jesus has died.

These are words meant as comfort for the disciples as they are forced to consider life without Jesus. Life as they know it will never be the same again. They are faced with change that they neither welcome nor for which they feel prepared.

Funeral words for us and no casket. Yet words for us to prepare us for a post-Easter life in a world that seems hostile and unwelcomed. Words for our life after Jesus' death. How do Jesus' words speak to us and our world? We know the same fear, the same disorientation as the disciples.

We live in a world of unprecedented change. We may be tired of hearing about it, but 'change' is nothing new and will not go away. In the midst of the disorientation of change we need something to give us hope, an anchor. And so we have these words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." And "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Words are sometimes too easy and not nearly enough. We can imagine how the disciples received these words. Their lives are turned up-side-down. The glory years of teaching and healing the crowds are a thing of the past. The intimate times of the daybreak breakfasts at the seashore, quiet times in the garden, times with Jesus are a faint memory. Arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, death -- and now they are huddled in fear. They have no idea how to go on, how to live, what can all of this mean for their lives in the future. "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Indeed!! These words, no doubt, seemed meaningless, they are troubled. Jesus seems so far away, they feel so very much alone.

We, too, are faced with unwelcomed change. The church as we know it is struggling, we are getting older, the "good old days" seem long gone and we are tempted to huddle in fear. But the words of Jesus come to us, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me."

We know fear and doubt. Change has gripped our world for so many years now, and not much of it has been good. With the corona virus we see schools close, businesses shut down, hospitals filled with sick Covid patients, church pews empty. We long for the "good old days", for stability and an absence of fear. We feel lost and look for a way out of it all. We know Thomas' wonder, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way." We want to cry out, "Lord, we are afraid. Stop the change. Stop the virus."

Nothing that we know, except the love of God in Christ Jesus, will be secure. Change will continue. Sickness will abound, but we need not be afraid because Jesus is with us. Jesus does not promise us easy sailing, but he does promise we will not be alone.

When jobs, health, family, wealth, politics, or whatever, let us down, all we can be sure of is that God is unchanging. In the midst of all that changes, Christ assures us, "you will live in the presence of God, now and forever."

So how do we live? We live as people who focus our lives on Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Those words are enough for our daily journey. They are words we can count on. Jesus is the truth because all we can really depend on, everything that has meaning for our lives is blessed by him.

Jesus' ministry was a short three years or so and covered very little territory. We are able to do much more. We are to do what Jesus did: feed the hungry, welcome the lost, heal the sick, lift up the oppressed. This text is not about life after death but about life in relationship with one who died for us. Jesus. This passage is about our life here and now, seeking answers to those big questions of life.

Jesus does not give us a how-to manual of life ahead, but he does assure us that he will be with us. "I am the Way the Truth and the Life", Jesus says and we are invited to continue on the journey, not knowing what the journey may hold but only that Jesus goes with us, and that is enough. Amen.

May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.