

John 14:1-14  
May 10, 2020

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Sometimes, I just do not understand the lectionary; that is, the list of appointed texts for the Sunday's of the church calendar year. Today is a classic case in point. Here we are on the fifth Sunday of Easter, just weeks removed from the resurrection celebration on Easter. While the smell of the lilies and flowers which adorned this space just few weeks may be gone, they are still fresh in my memory and at times are seemingly ripe within my nostrils refreshing my soul once again with the abundant aroma of grace, life, and hope. This is where I want to stay. I am not ready to leave so soon. So abruptly. Yet, that is where we find ourselves. Thrust back to Maundy Thursday, the eve prior to Good Friday and Jesus' death. Why can't we rest in the resurrection dawn a bit longer? Abide in the post-resurrection light. This is where I want to stay.

I have been asking myself this question all week. What were they thinking in plunging us back into the darkness of the final hours of leading up to our Lord's death? As I reflected, I realized there have been many a moment those fragrant flowers of Easter were not wafting through the air anymore. Their beautiful scent was far removed from my memory and Easter assurance it seemed had given way to pre-crucifixion fear, doubt, and uncertainty that manifested itself in a variety of ways. Will our offerings be sufficient to sustain our ministry? Is Jesus really hearing our prayers because it seems as if they are not being answered? How can we do the work Jesus states those who believe in him will do? The work he has been doing. And if I cannot comprehend that, he makes it even more challenging in saying we will do greater works. How in the world can we do that work with our doors closed? Apart from one another. Cooped up in our homes and when we do go out, we dawn our masks and try not to get within six foot of the neighbor we are called to love?

This is when it hit me. Perhaps our lectionary authors thrust us backward, only 5 weeks post Easter, because we so quickly find ourselves asking those very same

questions as Thomas and Philip did around that table gathered with Jesus. “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” The flowers of Easter morning at times so quickly seem to fade away and are replaced with by an ominous cross of death. The Jesus that meets us at the table, washes our feet, and is right before our eyes quickly seems so distant and far removed from our sight.

How quickly do we once again need to hear the opening words of today’s text? “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me.” How many times does the virus of fear, the virus of uncertainty, the virus of doubt, the virus of hopelessness, the virus of inadequacy, or perhaps the virus we simply aren’t good enough to be loved by Jesus set in and close our ears to the words of hope, promise, and good news Jesus speaks? Because I often find myself in that very spot upon reading this passage. Instead of seeing one of the most beautiful passage in scripture, some of the most life-giving words Jesus spoke, and a passage meant to comfort I find myself mired instead in a quagmire of perplexity. I find myself scratching my head with Thomas and Philip or simply sitting idly and silent as did the other disciples. Wondering just what this place Jesus states he is preparing for us is. Is it a physical locale or is he simply speaking metaphorically? What are these greater works we will accomplish? What does Jesus mean exactly when he says he is the only way to the Father?

These words were not meant to spark confusion or exclusivity as they have often been used to do so. No, these words were uttered by Jesus to calm the disciple’s fears. To transform uncertainty into certainty. These are words of hope. Jesus is telling them, and he is telling us that our trust is rooted in our relationship we have with him and with his Father. He abides in us. Whether we find ourselves at the empty tomb of Easter or once again standing around the cross of Good Friday we stand secure because he stands with us. When our hearts too our troubled, as they are in so many ways at this very moment in time, we know the way to the sweet scent of resurrection peace. Jesus is that way.

We have gone through challenging times before in our 125-year history as a congregation. We have skimmed by wondering how we might pay the bills. We have wrestled with how God is using us. Yet, we have survived by the grace of

God, and we have some done some extraordinary work in the name of Jesus and we will continue to do so. We must not let this virus derail us from the work Jesus has called us to do. Yes, we have had to adapt and will continue to need to do so. Yes, things we have previously done together in Jesus' name may need to be let go as we seek to follow the way he guides us into in our present context. We may not be able to fully see what that is yet, but we do trust, as the priesthood of believers have done for 125 years. Trust that we are not alone. Trust this is Christ's church and we are his people and he is our way. We have done and we will continue to do the work of Jesus Christ because we abide in his amazing grace and unending love. Even with our doors shut, worshipping God over the internet made possible by a cell phone and tripod. Even with masks upon our faces and six-feet from our neighbor Jesus is at work in us. Our mission is still the same. Proclaim the good news. Love God. Love our neighbor. Jesus is leading us to continue to do his work. Trust in me he says. Let not your hearts be troubled!