

Easter 5 John 14: 1-14

It was the final night of Jesus' life. The next day Jesus will have been executed on the cross and placed in a tomb. The thirteenth chapter of John records the scene in the upper room. Judas has been identified as the betrayer and has been sent out. Jesus is left with the other disciples. After telling them to love one another as Jesus has loved them, he tells them that he is going away and where he is going they cannot go. Peter wants to know why they cannot follow him and Jesus responds by asking if they are ready to lay down their lives for him. This is where we pick up in the account as we begin John 14 which is today's gospel. The scene has not changed and the chapter break occurs in the very middle of Jesus' conversation with his disciples about his leaving them.

The news that Jesus is leaving them is troubling the hearts and minds of the disciples. Jesus gives the solution for troubled hearts. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." The answer for the troubled heart is faith in Jesus. Just as the disciples believe in God, they are to have the same faith in Jesus. This is a staggering statement because Jesus is affirming his deity, placing himself on an equal level with the Father as an appropriate object of faith. Jesus is the object of our faith. To have hope in God is to have hope squarely in Jesus. The challenge is to place our faith in Jesus himself.

The challenge for these disciples would be to not believe in what their eyes would see in less than twenty four hours. Jesus will be arrested and killed. But they were not to put their faith in what their eyes would witness over the next twenty four hours. Trusting in God and trusting in Jesus means not trusting in whatever power is evident in this world. The answer is for our troubled hearts. We should not believe in what we see in this world. God is not dead. God is ruling. God is moving and active. God is at work in this world. God is accomplishing his purposes. I am reminded of the words of the late Lord Soper, the eminent Methodist theologian, who was once asked by a reporter on his arrival in New York on the "God is dead" debate.

"What have you to say about the fact that God is dead?"

Lord Soper replied; "Really, I did not know he was ill!"

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Jesus.

There is so much comfort in these words as Jesus explains why he has to leave them. Jesus has to go so that he can secure the destiny of all who believe in him. Jesus' departure is to the advantage for all of his disciples. Jesus is going to do something for his disciples. Our hearts are not troubled while living on this earth. Jesus is making ample provisions and there is more than enough space for every disciple to join Jesus in the Father's home.

There has been a lot of misunderstanding the KJV translation, mansions. When Tyndale made the English translation, "mansion" it meant in Middle English "a dwelling place." The word carried no idea of being large, expensive or imposing. Now people think of heaven in this physical sense of all the Christians having their own palace full of riches.

So Jesus says he has to go to prepare a place. What does Jesus mean that he has to prepare a place? We cannot impose our physical desires on the grandeur of the spiritual home of God. Jesus has to die so that we could come to him. The cross and the resurrection is the act of preparation. Jesus has to go so that we can have a place in the Father's house. Jesus must go to the cross and by doing so he is preparing a place in the Father's house for all who believe in God and believe in him.

Not only is their comfort for troubled hearts to know that Jesus has prepared a place for his disciples in the Father's house, but then there is a promise. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." Here is the promise that we can put our faith in. If Jesus went to prepare a place (which he did by going to the cross, defeating death, rising from the dead and ascending to the Father), then he will come again and bring his disciples to himself to be with him. Jesus is coming back to take his followers with him to be with him forever.

This prompts a question from Thomas. "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus, you said that you are leaving us and that we cannot go with you now. We do not know where you are going. So how can we know the way to where you are going?

Jesus' response is powerful. This is the sixth "I am" statement made by Jesus. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The emphasis of the description is on "the way." Thomas says that they do not know the way. "How can we know the

way?” Jesus says, “I am the way.” Jesus is the way to the Father because he is the truth of God and the life of God. Jesus is the truth because he embodies the supreme revelation of God. This is an interesting statement because Jesus does not simply say that he is blazing a trail and commanding others to take the way he takes. Rather, he is the way. The reality and truth of God are bound in Jesus. It is not simply, “Do what Jesus does.” It is more. He is the way. Therefore, come to Jesus for he is the path. True saving faith requires continuing belief in Jesus. Apart from Jesus, the world offers many things. But those offers are all godless, darkened, and deadly. Apart from Jesus, the way you are walking leads to eternal destruction. Jesus is the only way.

How is Jesus the way? If you know Jesus, then you know the Father. If you believe in Jesus, then you believe in the Father. If you have a relationship with Jesus, then you have a relationship with the Father. We are joined with Jesus in his descriptions and promises. Jesus is light and we are to be light. Jesus is the way and we are to be the way. We are to show the world the way to the Father. It is a God-given mission. The great commission is the call for us to be the way to Jesus for the world.

Know Jesus. Follow Jesus. Obey Jesus. Love Jesus. Jesus is the way because if you know Jesus, then you know the Father. Jesus reveals the truth of God and the life that is found in God. Then live as the way, showing other people Jesus also.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

Amen.