

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Sunday, May 10, 2020, Year A

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 14:1-14

"He is the Way"

Today is a day of celebration in which we honor one of God's greatest gifts – our mothers. We give thanks today for all women and especially for the women who gave us life – the women who gave us love. And so - Happy Mother's Day!

Today's Holy Gospel finds Jesus and His apostles in the upper room where they have eaten the Passover meal together, the Last Supper. Jesus knew what lay ahead of Him that evening; He knew that Judas was going to betray Him; He knew about the mockery trials; and how His friends the apostles would hightail it and run. He knew about the pain on the cross, the resulting freedom it would bring for mankind, and He knew about the borrowed tomb where He would be laid to rest – temporarily. Jesus felt compassion for His dear friends.

Jesus begins to tell them in this fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John that they need to trust Him no matter what. He speaks right to their hearts in verse 1. *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, Trust also in Me."* In effect, Jesus is saying, "I know you put your trust in God, and you can trust Me as well." He is also telling them to "remember, that when you can no longer see Me, don't stop trusting in Me." Isn't it always easier to trust in things that we can see and touch? Just ask Thomas. Remember John chapter 20 when Thomas said unless I see His hands, and put my hand in His side – then I will believe?

The Bible teaches us that the things we can see are only temporary. All the things you can see and touch are only here for a little while and then are gone, they are no longer. But the things you can't see, like love, last forever.

Jesus gives tremendous insight with these words, *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* (John 14:2-3) Throughout the Old and New Testament - God made so many promises – all of which He kept. He promised the children of Israel a land which would be filled with milk and honey. He promised a Messiah, and Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior was born. And now, Jesus promises that He is coming back for us. Someday we'll be with Him forever and ever. Our human nature can grow impatient, but the Lord through His prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah says, "You can trust in the promises of God. This promise will be fulfilled, too."

Jesus makes His description of heaven personal when He says, *"My Father's house,"* and that is another way of saying, "It is home." Home is a place where you can be yourself. Home is where you can take off your tie or jacket, your clergy collar, put on a comfortable sweater or shorts, and kick off your shoes. Home is where you can say what you are thinking. Home is where you're always accepted and loved. Home is where many of us have been staying, and worshipping due to this pandemic – this Covid-19. But home is special – where you're not just

a guest. You live there. That is home.

How awesome it is that Jesus is saying, "I'm going to take you to My Father's house, and it will be your home, too. You'll be a part of the family. You'll be home where you belong." He also says "I am going to prepare the many rooms for you. I'm coming back to take you so that you may be where I am." If you think about it we're almost there. Soon it will all be fulfilled, and we'll be in our Father's house. We'll get new bodies, and we won't have to worry about getting old and sick, or any pandemic, we won't have to worry about arthritis, aches and pains, or other things that continually trouble us here. "*Trust My promises,*" Jesus says.

In verse 4 Jesus says, "*You know the way to the place where I am going.*" And so Thomas says to Him, "*Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?*" How precious are these words that Jesus answers with. These words for every good Christian should be emblazoned on your heart. Jesus said, with true confidence, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" Jesus is saying, "I'm not just going to show you the way, or tell you the way, I'm going to come and take you by the hand to My Father's house. Then you'll be home!" "I AM THE WAY!" Jesus then continues by assuring them "*If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.*"

Incredibly there are some Christians who reject the uniqueness of Jesus as being the ONLY way. They are more worried about political correctness to their non-Christian friends than how they should present the Gospel to them (which is what we are called to do.) I want to suggest to you that the problem with that way of thinking is – if you 'dethrone' Jesus – then you 'enthroned' someone or something else! If you take Jesus off the throne by saying 'He is not God – I don't believe any of the words that He said' then you are putting someone or something on the throne in His place. That is not only dangerous – but it is heresy! The argument that all religions are really the same is absolutely untrue! By lumping the religious leaders together, as many do – you are saying that Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, Krishna, Moses, and the others don't give us direct access to the divine. What you are saying is that each provides a way to the 'foothills' – and not the WAY to the 'summit!' You are dethroning Him. Let's face it – all of those other leaders, Buddha, Mohammed, Krishna, Moses – they are decomposed. Jesus is alive! He walked out of His tomb.

By seeing Jesus in that way, dethroning Him – you negate and neuter the entire New Testament and all of early Christianity which insists that the One True Living God is the Creator, and the God of Israel. The Apostle John put it plainly right in the very beginning of his Gospel. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*" (John 1:1-3) Let me repeat the words that Jesus said in John 14:6 – He said, "*I am the way and the truth and the life.*"

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The real answer is that the truth and the life is Jesus Himself; the same Jesus who washed His disciples feet and told them to follow His example; who humbled Himself – in that “*while we were yet sinners, Jesus Christ died for us.*” The Jesus, as we heard last week, was about to give His life for His sheep, but unfortunately there are some who call these words arrogant and self-serving?

Whatever is going on in your life, and any burdens that you might be carrying, your solution is still the same – to trust in Him. Jesus said that He would never leave us or forsake us. We need to trust in His promises: when everything seems dark and gloomy, when everything seems to be falling apart, remember His promises – and never forget how especially important you are to Him; so much so that He would die for you! My dear friends, it is personal. Jesus died for you!

We need to trust in Jesus, trust in His words - He is the Way – and I promise you - you will not get lost or forgotten. He wants to take you by the hand and lead you to His Father’s house. He wants an everlasting relationship with you. In the last few weeks I keep thinking of and reminding you of the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:20 – Jesus says “*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*” It is that simple. We need to stop talking and to listen; I reminded you in last week’s sermon – to read His Word, open the Bible, and to listen to what our Shepherd has to say to you; listen for His voice.

He is the Way, He is the Truth, and He is the Life. He is the Way to Heaven; He is the “Alethea” the Greek word for Truth. In Jesus there are no lies! There are no falsehoods. Every single “red letter” in the Bible is true. I look forward to the day when I close my eyes and He takes my hand and carries me to ‘our Father’s house,” and I pray that you do as well.