

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
John 16:5-15  
May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Back in the fourteenth chapter of John, Jesus told the disciples that He was going to His Father's House (heaven) and prepare places for them. He said there were many rooms in this great mansion. Then Jesus said, "*You know the way I am going.*" Well, to be honest if I were in the shoes of the disciples... hearing parables being taught, bread manifested with 5,000 people, the dead coming to life and storms on the sea of Galilee stilled, I think I would want try – just try have a little bit of a clearer picture of all that Jesus is doing. If I were there, I think I would understand that there's a lot going on, a lot has happened, and there is a lot that I never thought could happen or would happen – so I would need a little more clarity. I get it.

So, when Thomas said to Jesus, "*We do not know the way you are going. How can we know the way?*" Guess what, I get it. I can understand a question like this because everything that I thought I knew or understood has changed. I didn't realize that God could become man. I didn't realize that men like Peter could walk on water. I have never seen dead people stand up – or those without sight have their vision restored. These are strange things to me, so I want to be sure, I probably should ask... like Thomas did... "*Lord, we don't know where you are going. How, can we know the way?*"

Jesus answers, "*I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" You have heard these words many times and they are familiar to you. But perhaps the words that Jesus says next are not so much. He says, "*If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.*" You know Him now, says Jesus. Now you know, says Jesus.

And now, in the Gospel text appointed for today, just two chapters later and chronologically a bit into the future, Jesus says, "*But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'*" When Jesus says this to His disciples it makes me want to say to Jesus, "The last time they asked you about where you are going, you told them, and you told them that they now understand. And if they don't understand by now, Lord, I'm sure they are afraid to ask again." "*None of you asks me, 'where are you going?'*" says Jesus. Right, Jesus, like they want to ask again after you told them that they now understood. But is this the reason they didn't ask? I'm not so sure.

Jesus knew why they didn't ask. Fear? Perhaps. Another reason is quite evident as well. As the disciples pondered the loss of their teacher and were taking His words of "going away" to heart, they were thinking of themselves. Questions like, "who will lead us when He's gone?" and "How are we going to know what to do?" were racing through their minds. They were frightened at the prospect of being left alone – even still not fully understanding all that would transpire at the Lord's death and resurrection. They didn't ask Jesus about these things, because the disciples had been too preoccupied with their own loss to ask more perceptive questions about the Savior's impending departure. And, like you know how it goes, sometimes we just want to be ignorant. We don't want to hear about, think about the bad. We would rather live in denial than face what is difficult.

Beloved, you are feeling the pinch. Graduations and Confirmations this time of year make you wonder how you are going to get your "everyday" tasks accomplished this month. And while

we may be throwing that big “shindig” for our son or daughter to celebrate a milestone of success, we still are preoccupied with ourselves – about our week and our month. We may even feel a little sorry for ourselves because we are giving so much of ourselves to others. Those other people should perhaps do a little suffering with us, we think, over all the stress and trouble the extra preparations have caused. We might say, “If they only knew how much I have sacrificed for them. If they only knew how I don’t have time for all this, but I’m still sacrificing so much of myself.” At times, we want people to know how much we are giving rather than relishing in the opportunity that God has given us to serve those we care about. This is how “self-absorbed” we can be – even if, like the disciples, we wallow to ourselves in self-pity.

Our Jesus could not be any more different than this backward perspective of self-sacrifice. While we fear being left alone... while we stress about how we are left to make all the preparations and worry about our own sacrifices, Jesus makes provisions, even in His departure. His self-sacrifice was anything but selfish. His self-sacrifice was pure, 100% gift, and is intended for eternal salvation of the ones He loves – you!! He even mentions that He has made all these preparations and will be the one taking all the burden and responsibility because He doesn’t want those around Him to worry about who will lead them. So, He gives them something else – the Spirit.

Jesus says when He goes away, and, as we approach the Ascension of our Lord, this becomes the tone of the Season of Easter, that He will not leave His people to fend for themselves. He says they will have the Holy Spirit. Not only is what Jesus doing completely self-less, He will not leave them when He leaves. They will have the Holy Spirit as their guide. They will have the Words of eternal life on their hearts and on their lips. Jesus says, “*When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth...*”

Chronologically speaking, at this point in time in the Gospel text, Jesus was speaking in terms of “the future.” Today, we know the Spirit has come and comes among us. The Lord, alone, went to the cross and accomplished the most selfless, self-sacrifice ever to be understood. This is the point in time – in the history of the World – where every bit of salvific work culminated into one moment for you. And now, ever since then, our Savior’s message has been the same. I will not leave you alone. And He hasn’t.

Jesus’ lonely way to the cross was for your sake – so that you are never alone. Jesus talks about the time after His Ascension to His disciples as being a “you are never alone” time because the Spirit is with you. Beloved, that has not changed. While the world has changed – while that which around you tries to convince you that Jesus is no longer concerned about your life – while you experience the ups and the downs of the good and the bad, our Lord says, “*Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.*” And it’s true. Our Lord is never far off – even if the way be lonely. Lonely? Yes, at times. Alone? Never.

Jesus says, “*You know the way I am going.*” For the disciples and for us today, the way was Calvary. The way to you, to your broken or disjointed life, is through the Spirit and the Word. Beloved, He comes. Take courage and know, the Lord comes and is “ever-present” among you. He comes and is with you always when the day be drear and the night falls upon our hearts. The Spirit testifies to the truth – and the truth does not and cannot change. Here’s the truth. Jesus loves you to death – for your precious life. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.