

Service for Sunday, May 10, 2020

Since many of you are unable to watch and hear today's worship service, lessons, a short message, and prayers for this day are provided for your devotion.

Greeting

As we continue to celebrate the fifty days of Easter, today's gospel includes Jesus' promise that he goes to prepare a place for his followers in God's house. Our baptism commissions us to share Jesus' mission in the world. As 1 Peter reminds us, we are a holy people, called to proclaim the one who called us out of darkness into light. In words and deeds, we bear witness to the risen Christ— he is our way, our truth, our life.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The Word

Today's Psalm is Psalm 31.

In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.
Incline your ear to me;
make haste to deliver me.
Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag and my stronghold;
for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me.
Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me,
for you are my tower of strength.
Into your hands I commend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth.
My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.
Let your face shine up on your servant;
save me in your steadfast love." (Psalm 31:1-5,15-16 NRSV)

The New Testament reading is from the 2nd Chapter of 1st Peter.

The words of today's gospel are most often heard during a funeral service. It is a popular choice of scripture for that occasion because the words provide wonderful assurance that the one who

has died in Christ has now taken up residence in their heavenly home. But Jesus' words are less about a place than a relationship: our relationship with Jesus and the God who has created us all. We can have a relationship with God that will one day be as real and obvious as are our relationships with one another. The hope of one day being with Christ fully and forever is as real as the works we are called to do in his name today.

Today's Gospel is from the 14th Chapter of John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it." (John 14:1-14)

The Word of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The Message

The Gospel message for today is commonly used at funerals...Jesus has gone to prepare a place for each of us. Therefore, we know the God of all through the life of Jesus, the Messiah. Certainly, these are words of comfort for the grieving family and friends of the one who's died. When we use this Gospel to celebrate the life of someone who God loves dearly, it seems that it is more an answer to our human questions and curiosities about what heaven looks like, instead of our relationship with God, through Jesus. It is true that humans are curious beings. I, too, often wonder what heaven is like, and I can't count the number of times that our granddaughters have asked me that same question, "What is it like in heaven?" There have even been adults who've asked me that: is it like that which is written in the Book of Revelation

– foundations adorned with precious, clear, and glimmering jewels, the walls and foundations of the vast eternal city covered with the purest gold, no light other than the glory of God shining on all, the Tree of Life abundant with fruit, and the River of Life flowing through the center of the city, clear and bright as crystal? And of course, I must answer those questions about heaven, “I don’t know.”

The City of God, Heaven, certainly sounds beautiful. The one problem when we wonder about the Heavenly Kingdom is that we are wondering by way of a human state-of-mind. I guess that’s OK, since we are human, but it might make more sense, though, to think about Jesus as the Way, and the Truth, and the Life...and not so much about our very own room in the Mansion of God.

The previous verses of the 13th Chapter of John are rather disturbing – the betrayal of Jesus. But looking at Chapter 14, we see more comfort in these verses which focus on the return of Jesus, the Lord. So in these next few moments, let’s take a look at some of the most significant phrases in today’s text.

First, Jesus lets his disciples know that “where he is, they will be also.” But in the previous chapter, Jesus tells Peter, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now: but later you will.” Yet, Peter was frustrated that he could not be with the Lord, but still Peter denied Christ and has caused disturbance among Jesus’ followers down through the ages. But still, Thomas, in the next Chapter of John, says, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Hear Jesus’ amazing, foretelling words, so well-known to so many from generation to generation: “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.” And “If you know me, you will know the God of all.” Jesus is the pathway, the road to eternity, the Way.

In other words, if one knows Jesus, one also knows God. For Jesus goes on to say, “Believe that I am in God, and God is in me.” Do the disciples look at Jesus’ hands to catch a glimpse of the one Holy God. That is very unlikely. These words, the disciples can only begin to grasp. Think about what will happen when the Holy Spirit is introduced. How will they begin to understand the Holy Trinity? We still don’t get it today. It’s impossible to explain. God, Son, and Spirit are one yet three. Regardless of our inability to understand, we can be assured that Jesus is our Guide, our Roadmap, the Way.

How many times have you heard Jesus say, “Very truly I tell you...”? These words, “very truly,” ring so certain. Everything that Jesus says and does is truth. Jesus’ words and teaching follow what God has told all people to do. God’s words are Truth, even though we often miss God’s point. We can never doubt the teachings of God’s most holy Son. So now we are at a point where we are to follow Jesus, the Way, and know that all we have been taught is true. On the Way to life eternal, we are to hear and heed the call to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and to love our neighbors, all people, in the same way that Jesus loves us, with a sacrificial love. In these few short words (I am the Truth), we are taught to have a relationship

with God AND our neighbors. The preaching of Jesus is sure and true. So believe for Jesus is Truth.

And finally, Jesus tells his disciples that he is Life. Our God and Jesus are One. In this divine Three-in-One, we are assured that there is life: life that we live today doing the good works of love and care for all people. And life beyond the grave. Life that will last forever, and life that can never be taken away from us, because we have been redeemed...redeemed by Jesus, the Christ. The One who lived, suffered, and died for each of us, granting us salvation and life. For he is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Amen.

Hymn Poem

*You Are the Way/Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life**

Come, my way, my truth, my life:
Such a way as gives us breath;
Such a truth as ends all strife;
Such a life as killeth death.

You are the way;
To you alone from sin and death we flee;
All those who search for God, you find
And by your grace set free.

You are the truth;
Your word alone true wisdom can impart;
You only can inform the mind
And purify the heart.

Come, my way, my truth, my life:
Such a way as gives us breath;
Such a truth as ends all strife;
Such a life as killeth death.

You are the life;
The rending tomb proclaims your conquering arm;
And those who put their trust in you
Not death nor hell shall harm.

You are the way, the truth, the life;
Grant us that way to know,

That truth to keep, that life to win,
Whose joys eternal flow.

Come, my way, my truth, my life:
Such a way as gives us breath;
Such a truth as ends all strife;
Such a life as killeth death.

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Prayers of the People

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Build us up, mothering God, as living stones united in your spiritual house. Continually strengthen your church as it is sent forth to proclaim your love. We pray especially for new congregations and those in redevelopment. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Humble us, creator God, as part of your creation. Fill us with respect and awe for the world you have made, including volcanoes, ocean currents, tropical rainstorms, glaciers, and other forces that both destroy and create. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Align our ways to your love, O God. We pray for countries, leaders, and other organizations as they prepare places for those seeking refuge and safety. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of healing and rest, help those whose hearts are heavy and weighed down by many troubles. Comfort their suffering, ease their distress, and carry their burdens, especially Bonnie Duggan, Jeanne Roen, Edna Mae Lewis, Judy - Curt Meyer's sister, Doug Nordland - family/friend of Derek Miller, Rose – Lenora Scheer's niece, Greg Turner, Fern Softing, Brandon - Victoria Savanh's cousin, and all others who need our care. Accomplish healing through the work of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, nutritionists, and all who tend to human bodies. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of giving, may the prayers of the people strengthen all who are working tirelessly during this global pandemic. Accomplish healing through the work of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, nutritionists, and all who care for those who are ill and those who are facing death. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Comfort us, gracious God, especially Fern Softing and her family, as they mourn the death of her sister Violet. Grant them assurance of the promise of the resurrection and comfort them in their grief. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus teaches us.

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing and Sending

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead
raise you to new life every day, fill you with hope,
and turn your mourning into dancing.

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Christ is risen. Christ is beside us. Christ is with us.
Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!