

Easter 5, May 10, 2020

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Lectionary Readings: Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60; Psalm 146; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

Sermon Title: *No Way but the Cross of Jesus!*

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of [our] heart[s] be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

Salutation: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:2)

Text: The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit comes to stir our hearts for the Fifth Sunday of Easter is from the Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 14th chapter.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, as we continue in the season of Easter, today is also Mother's Day. Certainly, it's a day of thanksgiving for our mothers. Yes, we ought to give thanks for those special women in our lives that take care of us, nurture us, and love us no questions asked.

Today, we ought to thank God that once again we may be in His holy house (or at least in these days of the COVID-19 pandemic that you have access to it through a radio broadcast or Facebook streaming). What comfort and joy that brings! And, it's also the comfort and joy that shines out to the rest of the world to see.

I. That comfort and joy is apparent in our Gospel Reading for today. As Jesus is in the Upper Room with His disciples, He brings us much comfort and joy with His words: *"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (v 6b). But, what thing to say. And what a time to say it:

- It's the Last Supper, and the cross is near at hand.
- It's the disciples' last night with Jesus.

From John chapter 13 we know the disciples had every reason to have troubled hearts. They were suddenly facing terrible difficulties:

- Jesus predicts His betrayal, and Judas disappears into the darkness.
- Jesus had said that they would no longer be able to go where He was going.
- Peter declares that he'll never abandon the Savior. Yet, Jesus replies that Peter will deny Him three times before the night is over.

So, everything the disciples are hearing up to this point is leading to Jesus' death the very next day on the cross. And, yet in our text, when they hear the words of Jesus – *“Let not your hearts be troubled”* (v 1a) – they realize the *Good News*. That the cross of Jesus Christ overcomes troubled hearts with the promises, assurances, and benefits of our great God.

II. Yes, Jesus overcomes troubled hearts by commanding faith in His great promises, established by His cross. You see, troubled hearts are no match for the Word of the Lord! In our text, Jesus commands faith – twice, no less: *“Believe in God; believe also in Me”* (v 1b).

Therefore, it's only in Jesus that we know God is our loving Father. And, that we can trust Him to help us and never forsake us.

With these commands of Jesus, the power of the Word of God is brought out. Yes, the Word has great power:

- The Word is the light to shine out of darkness, as in creation: *“‘Let there be light,’ and there was light”* (Genesis 1:3).
- The Word calls Lazarus out of the tomb (John 11:43-44).
- The Word in your Baptism creates your faith.

Luther put it this way: *“This is the meaning of the word of Christ spoken here: to believe in God and to face without fear whatever may oppose and confront us”* (AE 24:20).

Therefore, the basis for calming troubled hearts is trust in God. And when our troubled hearts are calmed, *“we have peace with God”* (Romans 5:1). So, we take comfort in the Lord's amazing promise of what God has in store for us by preparing *“rooms”* for all Christians. Now, the King James Version translates the word *“rooms”* as *“mansions.”* So, you may have heard: *“In My Father's house are many mansions.”* (v 2a).

The closest thing I can think of to describe Jesus' promise is the TV reality show *Extreme Home Makeover*. The show shows families in need receiving their *“dream home”* built and decorated for free. Your *“heavenly mansion”* will surely outshine anything on that show!

And the most amazing part of this promise is that Jesus will personally take us to our eternal rooms. He says in our text: *“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”* (v 3).

And, when was it that Jesus first went to heaven to begin the preparations? It was when He said from the cross: *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). Because it was at the cross that Jesus paid for all your sin. The sin, which would have kept you from your mansion.

III. But, Christ overcomes troubled hearts by assuring us that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, all verified through the cross. So, Jesus said: “*You know the way to where I am going*” (v 4). But Thomas, when he asked the question: “*How can we know the way?*” (v 5) is thinking of a literal map or a literal road. His thinking exemplifies how human reason wants to see God.

This is none other than a revelation of our sin, because:

- We don’t accept “*the way*” in which God appears as weak and suffering. It’s hard to accept Christ on the cross. We prefer a Tough Guy to help us out.
- We don’t accept “*the way*” of God hiding in the Means of Grace, as He comes to us in simple water, bread, and wine. Surely that’s too easy to save us!
- We don’t accept “*the way*” of our own cross and suffering. Sometimes in trial and tribulation it’s hard to see God.

But the way for Christ is His holy Passion and death on the cross. Though God is hidden in such a way, through the cross, Jesus became the means of the Way, the Truth, and the Life for our eternal salvation.

- *He is the Way.* Because Jesus’ cross is the only means to remove the sin separating us from the Father.
- *He is the Truth.* Because in Jesus we see the full truth of God’s gracious love for sinners and are assured that we are now forgiven children of God. Ultimately that love is displayed in the justice and the love of Jesus on the cross.
- *He is the Life.* As the creator of all, Jesus is the ultimate source of life. As Redeemer, He brought about the restoration of life with God now and forever. That life that was lost at the Fall in the Garden (Genesis 3:1-7). Yet, all who are found in Jesus’ cross never die.

Now, let’s consider the way, the truth, and the life through the experience of a lost traveler. The traveler finally stumbles onto the right road to his lodging after he’s found the right sign indicating which way to turn. And, then, he arrives safely for food and shelter.

We need the right road for the way, the right sign for the truth, and the right destination for the life. However, we need not stumble to find our way. For Jesus is all of these.

You see, it’s in Christ – the Way, the Truth, and the Life – that we know the Father. And for us Christians today, the works of Jesus are verified in the Divine Service. In the Divine service, Jesus prepares us for salvation in His Holy Meal.

You see, it's through His greatest work on the cross, where Jesus shed His blood, and through the Sacrament, that we continue to see, taste, and drink His blood. Therefore, it's in the Sacrament that Philip's request to see the Father (v 8), and ours, is granted. Therefore, in this Holy Meal:

- We see Christ.
- We see the Father.
- We see God!

IV. In this way Jesus overcomes troubled hearts through His benefits of the cross. So, we rejoice in all the benefits the Lord has won for us from His cross:

- The first benefit is that we'll do even greater works than He did. Imagine that! You see, through Christ's Church, more people than ever before are being reached with the saving Gospel. Yes, you and I, as members of Christ's Church, are privileged to be the ones who carry out the Christian mission. This is especially true in these times of the COVID-19 pandemic by the various ways of dissemination.
- The second benefit is the promise of answered prayer in Jesus' name. This isn't for our fleshly and earthly desires, but to teach us faith. Again, in the words of Luther: *"Thus our prayer must, in real and sincere humility, take no account of ourselves. It must rely solely and confidently on the promise of grace, in the firm trust that God will hear us, as He has commanded us to pray and has promised to hear us"* (AE 24:88).

Conclusion: So, dear friends in Christ, in three ways from the cross:

- *Jesus is the Way.* As Jesus had said to the disciples that He is the Way, we must keep on trusting Him, no matter what our circumstances. And that it's through Jesus that we approach the Father.
- *Jesus is the Truth.* We can trust Jesus because all that is real and true is found in Him. He is God the Word, and through His Word He reveals His salvation.
- *Jesus is the Life.* Jesus is the source of physical and spiritual life. Whoever believes in Him has eternal life (John 3:16).

What comfort and joy for troubled hearts!

In the name of ✠ Jesus, Who forgives all your sins. Amen.

To God alone the Glory!