

May 13

The gospel reading for last Sunday, May 10, was John 14:1-14. A powerful passage. Buckets of ink have been used by people writing about one thing or another that they find in these 14 lines, and I will talk about this passage more in the days ahead. For now I want to look quickly at the first six verses which are familiar to many of us as a regular part of the burial office. I have officiated at many hundreds of funerals and this passage, along with the 23rd psalm, is the most requested. Why?

For me, the salient points are three: your ultimate future is secure; you will be recognized and known, welcome and made at home; how you 'get from here to there' is by means of who and what I am.

I must admit to liking the King James version best for the first six verses, though the archaic language requires a bit of interpretation. I have laid it out here as I read/recite it:

“Jesus said,
‘Let not your hearts be troubled.
Ye believe in God;
believe also in me.
In my Father’s house are many mansions:
If it were not so, I would have told you.
I go to prepare a place for you;
and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that
where I am, there ye may be also.
And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know’.
Thomas saith unto him, ‘Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know
the way?
Jesus saith unto him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life:
No one cometh unto the Father but by me.’

Jesus says a lot very quickly: Don’t let the problems and fears and losses and uncertainties and confusion of the present time consume your attention. Hold onto the fundamental things.

Second: “There is room for you where my Father is; you will be in his presence then, and you are part of his household even now, I am going to make sure of your place and your welcome and then greet you myself and we shall be together.

Third: You know I am the reason, the meaning, and the reality of the life you live as a disciple of mine. Following me is an act of imitation in manner and purpose as well a pursuit of the destination and resolution you desire.

Fourth: I am a gateway, not the exclusive pathway. That is, I do not serve as a barrier. Knowing me as you do does not mean no one else will ever come into my Father's house.

Think about what I said earlier when I spoke about my being the gate way to the sheep fold. More than one flock is in the fold, and that is possible because the gate was the passage way in, and the gate does not require a particular approach to the fold itself. I make access possible, I do not determine how the flock arrives.

A less abstract way of putting this is, Jesus isn't keeping anyone out, he's creating the entry point. It also means stop fretting about the who and the how for other people getting in.

You often have heard me use the phrase "the hospitality of the gospel". This passage is a beautiful expression of that idea.