

Fifth Sunday of Easter – May 14, 2017
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

John 14:1-12 (NIV)

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. (2) My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? (3) **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.** (4) You know the way to the place where I am going." (5) **Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"** (6) **Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** (7) If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (8) Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." (9) Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (10) Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (11) Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. (12) Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus:

Do you know him? This man shaves several times a day but still has a beard. Who is he? He's a barber.

Who is he? That's what many people wondered about Jesus too. His life seemed like a riddle to many. Even those who thought that they knew him had questions about him. Some of those questions surfaced in our text for today. Thomas wondered where Jesus was going. Philip wanted to see the Father whom Jesus revealed prompting Jesus to ask him, "Don't you know me Philip?" What about you?

Theme: Do You Know Him?

1. Do you know him and his comfort?
2. Do you know him as your Lord and God?
3. Do you know him as the one who empowers you for service?

Do you recall when the events of this text took place? It was as Jesus was seeking to comfort his disciples on Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus had told them, "**My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.**" John 13:33 (NIV) Jesus wanted to prepare them for his sufferings, death, resurrection and ultimate return to Glory. But his words saddened them. They needed to know him and his comfort.

Our situation today is a bit different. Today we still enjoying the after-glow of our Easter celebration. The words, "Alleluia he is risen. He is risen indeed," are still ringing in our ears. But soon the emphasis of the church year will shift from the life of Christ to our Christian life which is one of the focuses of the Sundays after Pentecost. As long as we still living in this world we will encounter situations which will test us and challenge us. That's why it's vital that we know Jesus and his comfort.

Who is Jesus? He's the one who offers us this comfort: **"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. (2) My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? (3) 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. (4) You know the way to the place where I am going."**

What is it that sets your heart to churning? For the disciples it was Jesus impending departure that was causing their hearts to be troubled. Does an uncertain future seem to be staring you in the face? Are you struggling to deal with the loss of a loved one? Do your own inadequacies cause you frustration? Jesus has something to say to you. Stop letting your hearts be stirred up! Keep trusting in God; keep on believing in me! Take my promises to heart – lean on them, depend on them, count on them. Don't abandon your hope in God. Don't set aside your faith in me.

And after telling these things Jesus holds out a promise for us to hang on to. **My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? (3) 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.**

There's something settling about being at home. At the end of a long challenging day at school or the job – we can't wait to get home – to enjoy the stability and comfort of familiar surroundings and the love of family. But no matter how comfortable our earthly homes might be – they are not perfect. We all understand that one day we will have to leave our home in this world. Jesus wants us to know that there's a better place – one that he will prepare for us by taking away the curse of sin and death – a home in his Father's house. And Jesus wants to comfort us by assuring us that he will come to take us to be with him in that perfect home.

You know the way home, don't you? In the confusion that Thomas felt because of all the uncertainties which were confronting him Thomas said, **"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"** Maybe you've felt the same way at times – unsure just where to turn and what to believe.

Do you know Jesus and his comfort? Then you know the way. **Jesus answered [Thomas], "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (7) If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? (10) Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (11) Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.**

Do you know Jesus as your Lord and God? Jesus patiently explains to us that he is the one who can lead us to glory because he is our Lord and God. Think of the miracles you witnessed Jesus told his disciples. Do you remember the time when I calmed the stormy seas with a simple command, "Be still?" Have you forgotten how I fed 5000 people with a simple lunch? Weren't you there when I told the lame that his sins were forgiven and then commanded him to take up his bed and gone to demonstrate that I have the power and the authority to forgive sins? And didn't you hear me call out, "Lazarus, come forth?" You saw Lazarus come back to life, didn't you? What do these miracles tell you? Don't they tell you that I am Lord and God? Do they reveal my connection with the Father?

Today we can add one more question to the list? Haven't we seen his resurrection with the eyes of faith? The evidence speaks for itself – the Father was at work in the Son. Jesus is true God together with the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures and the evidence are clear. Don't stop believing. Keep on believing that Jesus is the one who has the Words of eternal life from the Father.

Jesus is Lord and God – our creator and our Savior – the one who is true and faithful to his promises and who never changes. Jesus is our comfort, our Lord and our God. **Because he lives we live.** The Apostle Paul reminds us that Christ died for our sins and that he rose again. Then he makes this application: **And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.** (2 Corinthians 5:15)

That thought brings us to our next question, “Do you know Jesus as the one who empowers you for service?” Listen again to Jesus. **Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.**

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus says. With that phrase Jesus stressed the fact that we can count on what he is saying even though it seems almost impossible to believe. The Apostle Paul reminded us that Jesus died for us so that we could live for him. The Apostle Peter echoed those same thoughts when he wrote the words of our Epistle Lesson for today. ... **you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6) For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 7) Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8) and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for. 9) But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10) Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** (1Peter 2:4-10 NIV)

Did you notice how Peter describes those who believe in Christ? **They are living stones built into a spiritual house to be a royal priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** Peter is reminding us that the Lord brings Christians together into his family to offer their services to God. For Jesus’ sake God regards our humble offerings of ourselves and our lives as pleasing and acceptable.

Furthermore Peter speaks of us **a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10) Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

We are a people who have received mercy from God. In his mercy God has made us to be his people and set us apart to serve him and to honor him. And the power to do this comes from the promise Jesus made to his disciples and us in our text for today.

Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Jesus’ return to the Father proves that his sacrifice for our sins has been accepted. Because of this sacrifice sin no longer controls us and we have the desire to live for God and serve God. Did you notice what Jesus promised? Those who believe in him will do what he has been doing. In fact they will do greater things than he has done.

Jesus had been pointing people to himself as the way the truth and the life. He did this primarily in the relatively small area of Israel. At his ascension Jesus gave his disciples the command to make disciples of all nations! We do this when we point people to Jesus as the way, the truth and the life.

Do you know Jesus as the one who empowers you for service? Those who do can bank on his promises and gladly live for him with the confidence that even our trials and tribulations are blessed by him. Those who know Jesus as the one who empowers them for service understand that they are not responsible for the results when they let their lights shine for Christ.

So now let me ask you this. Who empowers us for service by comforting us, by leading us to know him as God and Lord and by giving us his promise of blessing on our labors?

It's Jesus! Take his word to heart and you will know him and his comfort. You will know him as Lord and God and you will know him as the one who empowers you for service.

Amen.