



You Know the Way

Easter 5A – May 10, 2020

[Acts 7:55-60](#) – The stoning of Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

[Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16](#) – In you Lord, I seek refuge. Do not ever let me be put to shame.

[1 Peter 2:2-10](#) – Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[John 14:1-14](#) – In my Father’s house there are many rooms. I go to prepare a place for you. I am the way the truth the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a video and text of this sermon.

[CLICK HERE](#) for an audio podcast of this sermon.

These last few weeks in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, in place of my usual sermon starts and exegetical notes, Bishop’s Associates Tracey Breashears Schultz, Chris Markert and I have been providing sermons on video and in writing for congregations to use. Here are some links to those sermons:

[Easter 2, April 19, 2020](#)

[Easter 3, April 26, 2020](#)

[Easter 4, May 3, 2020](#)

[Easter 5, May 10, 2020](#)

For sermon thoughts on Acts 7, The Stoning of Stephen, click [Preaching Deacons: How to Not Get Stoned to Death.](#)

John 14:1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In 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? ³And 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.

⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸Philip said

to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹Jesus 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'? ¹⁰Do 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. ¹¹Believe 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.

¹²Very 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. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

You Know the Way

Grace to and peace in the name of Jesus, who travelled the countryside healing people with diseases and proclaiming the good news of God breaking into our world.

Blessings to you in this strange time of global pandemic, as you shelter in place out of love and concern for the most vulnerable among us.

The Sunday after Easter, Easter 2, the disciples were also sheltering in place, not because of an epidemic, but for fear of being crucified like their leader. They were hiding in the upper room, when Jesus walked through their doors of fear. The first words out of his mouth were, "Peace be with you." In fact he said it three times in that passage. Those words of hope and peace, along with Jesus presence, turned those frightened disciples into globe-trotting apostles and missionaries willing to give their lives for the vision they had been given for the world. How might Jesus be walking through your locked doors of fear today?

Easter 3 we heard about the forlorn disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus was walking on the road with them, but they did not recognize him. Is it possible that Jesus is walking along the road with us too, even when we can't see it? Where is Jesus showing up in your world right now, perhaps disguised as a stranger on the road, or maybe someone in need?

Last Sunday, Easter 4, Good Shepherd Sunday, we read one of the most beloved Psalms: **Psalm 23.** The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He leads me... To beautiful green pastures. Beside quiet waters. Along paths of righteousness. To restore our soul. Do we trust that even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death God is with us, comforting us with rod and staff, preparing a lavish table for us, right in front of the enemy. Our cups are running over. How is God restoring your soul today?

The Good Shepherd says, "I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." What does that mean for you? How is God filling your cup with overflowing abundant faith, hope, love, joy, peace?

This Sunday's gospel begins with Jesus' words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You know, when I took pastoral care classes, read books on pastoral care and spend a summer as a hospital chaplain, they told us never to tell people not to be afraid. Don't tell people how to feel. I get that. You could make them feel guilty or ashamed for being afraid, and fear is a normal response to a difficult situation. I get it.

But over the years I have wondered about that. First of all, because my mom, may she rest in peace, used to say, "It's okay honey. There's nothing to be afraid of." I found those words deeply comforting. Because she had been through stuff in her life. I trusted her. So when she put her arms around me and said, "Don't worry," I believed her.

And second of all, because about every time an angel appears in the Bible it seems the first words out of that angel's mouth are, "Be not afraid." And Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount said, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, drink, wear. God knows what you need. Consider the lilies. Consider the birds of the air. And in today's gospel, Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust God, trust me. I've got you. Even if the sky falls, I've got you.

Right now it's normal to be a bit worried. Will I get sick? Will I die? Will someone I love get sick? Will someone I love die? Will we have enough food? Enough toilet paper? How will we come through this economically.

And all this is new. We've never been through anything quite like this. The last global pandemic that close to this was the misnamed Spanish flu of 1918, over a hundred years ago. And that flu broke out in January, but the three deadliest months were September, October and November, because people became complacent during the summer. It's normal to be afraid, but Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust in me. I've got you. **You already know the way.**"

And Thomas, good old doubting Thomas, said, "Um excuse me. **We do not know the way.**" Jesus responds, yeah you do. "**I am the way.**"

How could you have heard me preaching about God breaking into our world and seen it in changed lives and not **know the way**? How could you have followed me through my healing ministry all these years and say you don't **know the way**?

Today, the modern world is suddenly reacquainted with what the ancient world lived with daily, the oldest traveling companion of human history: a life-and-death disease over which we have no control.

A global plague may be new to us, but it is hardly new to the Bible. In Exodus we read about ten plagues.

It may be new to us, but Jesus healed lepers. It is hardly new to Christianity. It was during plagues in the Roman Empire that Christians made a name for themselves after all.

The spread of the 2nd century Antonine plague, which killed off one fourth of the Roman Empire also led to the spread of Christianity, as Christians cared for the sick, and preached not an angry God punishing people with disease, but a loving God who walked with you in the midst of a broken creation.

The 3rd century Plague of Cyprian was probably Ebola. A 3rd-century bishop named **Cyprian** told Christians not to grieve for the dead in heaven, but to care for the living on earth. Bishop **Dionysus** described the work of churches, who, “Heedless of the danger... took charge of the sick, attending to their every need.” And why not? Was Jesus’ own ministry among the sick not a central aspect of his life? If you’re gonna follow Jesus, then follow Jesus. Feed the hungry. Welcome the stranger. Care for the sick. **You do know the way.** Again, the church grew. The church has often grown the most in times of distress.

In the 4th Century, the Roman Emperor **Julian** complained that “Galileans” as he called them, cared not only for their own, but even for non-Christians. Church historian Rodney Stark said because of this the death rate in Christian cities was half that of non-Christian cities.

In 1527, when the Bubonic Plague hit Wittenberg, Martin Luther said,

We die at our posts. Christian doctors cannot abandon their hospitals, Christian governors cannot flee their districts, Christian pastors cannot abandon their congregations. The plague does not dissolve our duties: It turns them to crosses, on which we must be prepared to die.

I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I

have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others...

This may be your first rodeo, but it's not God's first rodeo. It's not the church's first rodeo. The church has often thrived and been renewed in times of plague and social upheaval. Jesus says, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. You know the way. I am the way."

We as a church know how to respond to a pandemic. We may have wandered from time to time, but we have a long history of walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus is the way.

But what if I get sick? You might. And 97.5% of those who do will recover.

But what if I don't? Jesus says, "Don't let your hearts be troubled." My friends, the good news of the resurrection means the worst thing is never the last thing. You are loved with an everlasting love that is stronger than the grave. So, be not afraid, don't let your hearts be troubled. You know the way. Jesus is the way.