

John 14:1-14

Last week we heard Jesus respond to a question about his healing of the man born blind with a story about the shepherd and the sheep and coming into the sheep fold through the gate, and going out of the gate with the shepherd leading the way for the sheep.

I don't know about you, but sometimes **I find myself asking the same questions** that Thomas and Phillip do in my own life.

*“Lord, I do not know where you are going. How can I know the way?”*

*“Lord, show me the Father, and I will be satisfied.”*

*And I wondered, “How can a dwelling place calm my troubled heart?”*

The Jewish people have been looking for a Messiah (the promised deliverer of the Jewish Nation, gave people hope to be free of Roman rule) to free them from the occupation of Rome, and the disciples believe that they have found him:

- The disciples believe the **Messiah is immortal**.
- The disciples have a vision of a messianic superman **who will free their people** from Roman occupation.
- The disciples believe that the Messiah **will usher in** an eternal kingdom of peace.

The disciples have been with Jesus **since he began his public ministry**, they have **expectations**, and they have their **lived experiences** and **learned religious understandings**.

What Jesus is saying to them is **so far from those expectations and experiences**, and way **beyond their understanding**. *“Lord, we do not know where you are*

*going. How can we know the way?"*

- The disciples believe the Messiah is immortal, but **he is about to be executed.**
- The disciples have a vision of a messianic superman, but he is about **to be seemingly defeated by oppression.**
- The disciples believe that the Messiah will usher in an eternal kingdom of peace, but they are **about to experience horror** beyond their most terrified imaginations.

Thomas speaks the question that many of us find ourselves asking: *"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"* Thomas is asking for directions, he is asking for a kind of travel guide that will keep him from getting lost. He wants the step by step instructions that will tell him where to turn and which direction to go. **He is trying to understand what Jesus is saying, while at the same time holding onto what he knows from his life experiences.**

Jesus response to the question is "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 also know my Father. From now on you DO know him and have seen him."

**I know you. You know me, so you know the Father. In fact you have seen the Father, because you have seen me!**

This verse has been used as a way of sorting, as a way of separating, as a way of saying who is in and who is out. When this verse is taken out of the larger overarching story of John's Gospel, it becomes judgment.

**We take Jesus' words of assurance and promise and we add a condition to the promise turning it into a weapon that is harmful and hurtful.** I myself have struggled with this verse and some of the preaching that I have heard that use this verse to say "Our way is the ONLY way." It **can cause worry and anxiety** about salvation and whether or not we are loved unconditionally, accepted unconditionally by God.

Our modern situation **is not the same as the situation the first-century community** that John was writing to. John's Gospel was written in the heat of a theological debate between Jewish communities over whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. Those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah had been barred from the Temple, and **John is trying to respond to that specific historical situation.**

When we read this text in isolation we miss the point that the entire **Gospel of John is written about the intimate relationship between Jesus and God the Father, intimate relationship between Jesus and his followers, intimate relationships in community.** It is not about excluding some, it is a promise that all who have seen Jesus, or come to know Jesus, through the testimony of his disciples know God the Father. **You know me. "Who am I?" Glad you asked, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus reveals himself as the source of life, abundant grace, and signals the very presence of God.**

“*If you know me*” are **words of comfort, not condition**. Jesus wants them to be **secure in the promise** he makes, **to be with them**, even when he cannot be seen in the concrete fleshy way of this world.

**Jesus wants them to know there is nothing uncertain about their present or their future because of their relationship with Jesus.**

Jesus words **are words of comfort and hope**, promise and plain speech. If we can **look beyond what our culture tells us**, and be willing to *expand our learned religious understandings*, **we can see the promise in John’s Gospel.**

Jesus talks to the disciples, **anticipating the events that lie ahead:** the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension. All of these events in the Gospel of John are **part of the incarnation**. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The disciples are going to be faced with end of the incarnation, the end of Jesus’ presence on earth as God. **Jesus needs them to know that there is more beyond the crucifixion.**

Think about that even though **what is human must die, Jesus is crucified and dies, the resurrection and then the ascension are the next realities for Jesus and his believers.** The crucifixion is *not the end*; it is quite remarkably **the beginning!** And the resurrection anticipates the ascension. The words we read today are **about ascended life with God**. “*You know me.*” Just as Jesus will ascend to the Father, so also will Jesus’ believers. Jesus goes ahead and prepares an abiding place for them.

Bringing me back to my question about *how a “dwelling place” can calm my troubled heart*. The “dwelling place” is not about a place, a house, a castle, a mansion, or any of the other physical living space.

**It is about the intimate presence of God. Ascended life means life with God, with Jesus, sharing in their intimate bond and all that intimacy entails. *Where Jesus is, there we will also be.***

Hear Jesus’ words whispered in your ear, **“You know me, and I know you.”** *Hear the unconditional promise of Jesus*, let the hurt, anger, shame, judgment be pushed away and **be filled by the love of God in Christ Jesus.**

Do not let your heart be troubled,  
for Christ Jesus lived, died, was raised, and  
ascended to God that **we may have life, here and forever, in  
abundance.**

As you think about this text in the days ahead, remember *we live in the light of the promises of Jesus, the one who came to reveal God’s love for the world.*