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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
May 10, 2020  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 17:1-12, 1 Peter 2:4-10

Hymns: 21:1-3; 467:1-3; 355; 45:1 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 14:1-12

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”

<sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

<sup>7</sup>“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. <sup>11</sup>Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup> “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our risen and ever living Lord, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: “You can’t get there from here!”

You know where you want to go. Do you know how to get there? We have all had the experience when we are in unfamiliar territory that we get turned around, and even though we think we know our destination we simply cannot find the way that leads to that destination. You may ask for directions, and still be confused. It’s almost like someone is telling you, “You can’t get there from here. You need to go somewhere else first!”

When we first moved up to northern Minnesota we experienced that frustration of getting turned around and confused a number of times. Not only were we entering unfamiliar territory, but it was winter. You might ask, “Why should that make a difference?” Because we moved into the heart of lake country, and the lakes were covered with snow and ice. Often a slough, or small lake looked no different than an adjacent farm field also covered with snow. Many times the directions given were to turn north or south at a given slough or lake. After going around so many bends and curves around fields and lakes it was quite easy to lose track of one’s direction.

So it is with mankind as we attempt to make a spiritual journey to God. One may think one knows the desired destination of a heavenly homeland with God the Father, but if one doesn’t know the Way, one will most certainly get turned around and lost, and may not even realize it until it is too late. What people ultimately need to know is what I was told, **“You can’t get there from**

**here!”** Natural man cannot find his way to God because he is on the wrong path, a path that leads away from God.

In times of distress this confusion is only intensified. We are living in times of distress. We need to know with certainty that the Way before us is the right way that we might possess assurance for deliverance and life in the face of uncertainty of this world. Jesus Himself lays out the path of life for us in our text that we might know --

**THEME: The Way to God the Father.**

Only then will we have the confidence of faith for these troubled times. Then we shall know --

### **I. The Comfort of Putting our Trust in Jesus.**

Distressing times come into people's lives. As obvious as that statement is it doesn't change the impact when trouble comes into our own lives. The prospect of trouble can be almost as disturbing as dealing with the trouble itself when it finally does arrive. It is still a shock when the worst happens. And it will. Trouble comes into each of our lives. Jesus presented this lesson to the disciples right before He was betrayed into the hands of His enemies, which would lead to His sufferings and death on the cross. This lesson is a great assurance for us.

One's first thought may be: "We are not facing that situation in our lives. We know how that turned out, and it was only a short time before Jesus was alive again, and appeared to His disciples." We may suggest that we face a greater uncertainty as we see society in unrest. It appears that even the leaders of our government are losing their united front in addressing the current crises of the Covid-19 pandemic. The general population is growing tired of sitting at home, feeling restless and uncertain. Many feel that what is actually happening is that far too many people are losing their livelihoods, and financial well-being is endangered.

Actually the disciples faced a greater trial of far greater intensity; and knowing how that turned out is indeed most important to us in facing any uncertainty in our own lives. Jesus brought a sense of certainty to the situation then, and what He did **then** brings

certainty and hope to every time of trouble in our lives **now**. Jesus told His disciples:

**John 14:1-6** “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And where I go you know, and the way you know.”  
<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”  
<sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus’ opening words weren’t only a call for the disciples to know that Jesus lived, and so believe that He existed. It was a call for them to put their trust in Him. As much as it might appear to the disciples that things were out of control in the coming hours and days, that was a gross misperception. Things were very much in Jesus’ control as He fulfilled the Father’s will for the salvation of a fallen and lost mankind. Jesus knew full well what lay before Him. He understood that it was all necessary to reach that final destination of eternal life for all those who put their trust in Him. Yes, He would be taken by His enemies and suffer many things, and be crucified, but in all this Jesus was accomplishing that which would “*save His people from their sins.*” (Matthew 1:21)

He was going forward to the cross and the grave, and ultimately return to His Father in heaven, ALL to prepare a place for us. In His Father’s house there are many dwelling places. Jesus went to prepare a place not only for those disciples with Him in the upper room, but also for **us**.

Jesus continued to call for this trust in Him by explaining that He is the Way to heaven. He is the Way to eternal life. He will come again to receive His disciples, to receive **us** to Himself that we may be with Him forever. The destination is before us. Don’t let your hearts be troubled by all the distractions and troubles and uncertainty and distress and panic and grief we may see around us. Don’t let your hearts be troubled as reporters continue to sow the seeds of fear by throwing out numbers of infected people, and

portraits of those who have died, making it all the more real that you too are in deep, deep trouble. YOU might die!

Listen to Jesus as He tells YOU, “Let not your heart be troubled.” We know where He has gone, and we know the way. Don’t get yourself all turned around by the things you see in the world. Follow Jesus. Thomas expressed the confusion of spirit experienced by the disciples with his question, “*How can we know the way?*” (v.5) Stay focused on Jesus’ answer: “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” (v.6)

Jesus is the Way to our final destination. Jesus is the Truth of salvation! We have peace with God through the redemption provided in His sufferings and death! This is the **only** way to God the Father. “*We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Romans 5:1) There is no other way. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus! Jesus is eternal Life!

This is the exclusive nature of the gospel of a crucified and risen Jesus. It excludes all other religions, all other gods, all others merits as being false and misleading.

This also reveals the **inclusive** nature of the gospel. Each and every sinner who trusts in the merits of Jesus as our crucified and risen Savior knows and possesses the Way to the Father, and certainty, absolute certainty of life forever with God.

We know --

## **II. The Way to the Father’s Presence.**

The verses from our text we’ve just discussed are the most familiar to us. Jesus continued with a lesson regarding the connection between Him and His heavenly Father. The mystery of this relationship of Jesus to the Father, and then through Jesus, the believer’s relationship with the Father, is a real wonder for us to carry within our hearts. Jesus said:

**John 14: 7-11** “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. <sup>11</sup> Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Philip was the “seeing is believing” kind of guy. One might think he came from Missouri, the “show me” state! In reality Philip was just like us, or we are just like him. It is difficult for us to comprehend these truths of the gospel when they seem so distant from our current temporal reality. In the very first chapter of this gospel according to John we were told, “*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*” (John 1:18) That is the point Jesus is explaining for Philip as well as for us with these words. God the Son came down to earth and became incarnate, took upon Himself our flesh and blood that He might reveal the Father’s love and grace to us and **for** us in saving us from sin. And so as we know Jesus: the miracle of His birth, the greatness of His love in suffering and dying for us, the wonder of life revealed in Jesus’ resurrection, when we know this Jesus then we know the Father. This is how God has revealed Himself to us. We know the Father by knowing Jesus. And of course one cannot separate this wonder of grace in Christ from the Father, or see Jesus without also seeing the grace of God for our salvation. Jesus is the Way to God. The entirety of the gospel comes to us from our Savior God, “*for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” (John 3:16)

By the grace of God in Christ we have come to know the Father, as OUR Father. What a difference that makes in life. We have direction, heavenward direction. We have certainty, the certainty of **everlasting life!** Indeed because we have the Father we have also been given --

### **III. The Father’s Power and Purpose in this Life.**

These words of Jesus at the conclusion of our text are simply amazing. Jesus said:

**John 14:12** “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

What works is Jesus talking about? Our minds immediately go to His miracles of healing; restoring sight to the blind, or making the lame walk, or raising the dead. **I believe in Jesus!** Should I expect to do these things? Should I expect to do greater things than these? We know that the Apostles and a few others did perform miracles in Jesus’ name. These miracles confirmed the gospel message they declared. Once the Scriptures were established these signs and wonders ceased, but greater works than these continue to our day. They continue to this day because Jesus went to the Father, where all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him. With that authority He sends us out into all the world to preach the gospel to all humanity. (Matthew 28:18-20) Greater works than Jesus’ signs are happening every day as the gospel goes forth into all nations. As the gospel is proclaimed to lost souls, souls caught up in spiritual **death** are granted **life** in Jesus’ name.

On three different occasions Jesus’ raised the physically dead to life. All three of those individuals went back to the grave. As you share the gospel with a lost sinner the Holy Spirit works through that gospel to bring that person **eternal** life. This happens because Jesus returned to the Father with His mission accomplished, and so we have been blessed with the Father’s power and purpose, the power and purpose of salvation. This power and purpose has come to us that we might fulfill God’s purpose in our individual lives through faith in Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord! We fulfill that purpose when we “proclaim the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Where are you going? Are you sure of your destination? Are you sure you know the way? With all the distractions in this world you still do know the Way! You know the Truth! You know the Life. **You know Jesus!** You are on the right Way for this is the Way to the Father. We are connected with God in Christ. “Let not your

heart be troubled” by what you see in the world, or hear on the news. You believe in God; believe also in Jesus. He is in control.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.