

Home on the Road

John 14:1-14

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“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In 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? And 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. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “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 know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus 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’? Do 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. Believe 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.

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

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Here in the upper room, Jesus is speaking to his disciples about his impending death. A strange Easter text to be sure. And in the midst of talking about his death, Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” And the disciples and I imagine many of us do not understand what this means. How can our hearts not be troubled? Jesus is going to die. The state is going to execute him. The Stay at Home order is extended. Unemployment is at an all time high. The death toll of this virus is staggering. Who knows when we will be able to hug our loved ones again. “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Sure Jesus.

The reason our hearts should not be troubled Jesus says, is because “I am going to prepare a place for you in my Father’s house. I need to get the guest room ready, make the bed, provide fresh linens.” And so often this text is read at funerals for the future hope that it promises. But if you are like me right now, I am not wanting a future hope. I want hope now. I want to be with God now. I want the virus to be over, to worship with my church, to visit my family, to play with my friends. I do not want to wait any longer. My patience and my sanity are wearing thin.

That is why today I want to zoom in on this image of home that Jesus uses. “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.” But what is a home and how does it provide hope? Some say, “Home is where the heart is.” Others, “Home

is where you are always welcomed.” And still others say, “Home is the people who love you.” Today I am feeling like home is where we are locked in and losing our sanity one day at a time. I am so ready to be out of my home.

But home is so much more than just the four walls that keep us warm and safe and maybe a little stir crazy. A home is made up of people not walls. Home is our friends and family who love us. Home is a church family that is always there for us. So while we are stuck at home we are also desperately missing our home. And Jesus tells us that God has this home prepared for us, a home filled with love and joy and some delicious cooking. God has rooms for each and everyone of us. And the most beautiful thing for me right now in this passage is that this home is available to us right here, right now. It is fully available in quarantine and isolation, in our homes, apartments, and gardens.

The disciples are confused about this home as well. Jesus says that the disciples will know the way, but Thomas and Philip ask the great questions and raise the important concerns. Where is this home? How do we get there? We have never been before. Can you give some directions? And Jesus offers them another metaphor on top of the home metaphor, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” And while this quote has so often been used to keep some in and others out, I think many have missed the point.

Jesus is the way, the path, the road. This life is a journey. Jesus teaches us how to walk this road. This life is about engaging and living on the road of life, traveling with the divine and our neighbor, learning to love ourselves, our neighbors, creation, and our God. The road of living like Christ. It is not about the future destination. It is about the here and now.

Which brings me back to home. The word that Jesus uses to talk about a dwelling place comes from the same word meaning to abide. The home that Jesus is talking about is one we can enter today. This is about spending time with God right here, right now. In our homes, in our cars, in our masks. With ourselves, with our neighbors, with all creation.

And these seemingly opposite metaphors of road and home, come together in our abiding with God. While we walk this journey of life, the point is not a future destination. The point is dwelling deeply with God in the present. It is about letting God walk with you on the road, a consistent partner and ally. So my question for you this morning is: how do you best engage with the divine? Is it through meditation or study? Is it through service or gardening? Is it through quiet times or conversations with others? I want you to slow down and take special time this week to abide with God. Stop the busyness, stop the netflix, stop the news and just be, be with God. Because Jesus is the roadmap of how to abide with God.

Jesus prepares the way to a home of rest that is right in front of us. That through the fear and the anxiety of the present pandemic, we might reach out and touch the divine. Through prayer and study, silence and conversation, work and relaxation. This is seeking Christ's way. God is present. Jesus taught us that. And that is why in the upper room, Jesus tells his disciples to "not let their hearts be troubled." God was abiding with them, and God is abiding with us, today, tomorrow, and forever.

Amen.