**5/7/23**

**The Training Wheels are Off!**

**John 14:1-14**

Another Easter Day is upon us folks! May continued Easter Blessings be granted to each and every one of you through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! For we are forever thankful and mindful that he has Risen, and he has Risen Indeed! Amen!

As you sat in your pews this morning and listened to today’s Gospel Reading I am sure you thought that Jesus must have had some questions running through his head at times. Maybe you picture him like I do at times, and see him just simply standing there and shaking his head. After all he was human for a short bit of time, and he did walk in our sandals. Despite being the divine, and being all-knowing and all-powerful, he was still human for a bit. So, it is very hard not to picture human characteristics that many of us exhibit from time to time. That is after all how we can manage to relate to our God, and that is what sets him apart from being any other ruler or deity that we simply have nothing in common with.

The questions he had while he was shaking his head at times, are pretty easy to see from today’s Gospel Reading. I mean he had two central points that he was driving across, and no matter what he did or said it was like these guys just did not get it for some reason. Now, was it because they were in denial that he was telling them he was going to be leaving them soon, or was it the fact that like any one of us they were more comfortable and dependent upon the Father because he was physically present with them? So, maybe they thought that if they acted like they did not understand fully, maybe he would consider staying around a bit longer, and they would not need to move forward and do things and imagine life without him. How small their minds, and our minds can be at times. We are blessed to have our family, friends, and mentors for a season. However, we not need be so greedy to think that they will be with us forever, or do it for us forever. We are called to move forward and carry on their legacy and their mindset with our own little twist on it as well. This life on this ball of mud is only temporary for sure.

We are reminded that any great parent or leader cannot lead if he has not been the one to first deal with, work through, and experience the same things he expects those to follow through and carry on afterwards and do. Gaining trust and understanding, let alone instilling that trust and understanding are not always easy. So, Jesus doing that with his followers was vital if he ever expected them, or even us, to be able to do so. We are also forever reminded, just like the disciples, that the training wheels need to come off, and we need to show respect and honor while exhibiting that which we have learned from those that have gone before us.

So, if we were to picture things, and put some of those very questions Jesus might have had into words while he was shaking his head at times, I am sure that they would have sounded pretty close to this… Oh Thomas and Philip what is wrong with you? Why do you both doubt and question so much that it almost seems as if you do not believe? Why do you both seem to make things so much more complex than they really need to be? Why can’t you both just listen then lead and follow by my example? Is enough really ever going to be enough for you two and your brothers?

I mean come on, could you imagine if Jesus just stood there in front of Thomas and Philip and just shook his head at them? Could you imagine if he called them out for their doubt in front of everyone else in a disrespectful manner? Could you imagine if he just thought to himself that these guys were just not going to get it and have given up on them? Could you imagine if he taught in such a way that was not able to be understood, followed, or duplicated by anyone that came after him? Could you imagine if he just did not continue to share with the disciples until his very last moments with them? The answer to all of these could you imagine questions is pretty plain and simple. We can’t and we don’t imagine any of that! Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. He will do whatever we ask in his name. He reminded all of his followers of those two very distinct points, and he continues to do so each and every day when we join together in community and explore his Word. He empowers us together, just as he did his disciples, to be able to go out and share his truths and his Word with everyone so we can continue to grow the church.

Sometimes looking at the bigger picture, than that of which is right in front of you is not always that easy. “The disciples, as usual, don’t seem to get the entire story. They are left feeling afraid, even abandoned by their Lord. Surely they must have been asking themselves how things were going to go on without their leader, their Holy Father, their Lord. They don’t know where He’s going and they’re not sure they know this way that He’s talking about to get back to Him.” (4)

“We echo Thomas’ words in our own ways. We look at our surroundings and we see the death in the world. We see the assaults of the sinful world upon our Christian faith. We see a great churchman struggle to even utter the words of God. We see a helpless woman struggle through brain function loss and starvation. We see all of this and we wonder in ourselves if there truly is a rhyme or reason to this struggling, strife, and striving. We wonder if the words of our Lord are true. We see the loss of having him around and ask, “how can we know the way without you here?,” and we ask, “how can THIS be the way?”” (4)

Then, of course we often act like Philip as well. “Philip doesn’t want to know a way; he just wants to get to the end. There are times that we too would like to just get to the end. We do not want to be pressured into living our faith outside of this sanctuary. It’s too hard. It’s too much suffering. We could be rejected. We could be hurt. We do not want the bloody cross of Christ; we want a happy plastic Jesus. We do not want to take up that cross and deny ourselves. We want to sit placid in front of our television sets and computer screens, not denying ourselves, but denying everything - everything but ourselves.” (4)

Despite acting and being very much like Thomas and Philip at times we need to realize that there is more out there. We can easily look at the world, and all there is in it, and say the job is someone else’s. We can often question why things are getting so bad, or be fooled into the thought that things are not ever going to turn around. The devil has a knack of digging his heels in and trying to get us to doubt despite our realization and understanding that Jesus has gone on before us to create a place for us, and that we can always ask of him and he will provide. It is our job to push back these doubts, and it is our job to inform others of the God we serve and invite them as well so that the world and the life after can be a better place for sure.

We are also reminded that ““Father” is not God’s name but a metaphor for a parent who has endless compassion and mercy. The qualities of this parent are visible in Jesus, whose ministry is known to the apostles. Seeing Jesus’ healing compassion – which his followers have witnessed – is to see the Father’s compassion.” (1) A father or parent guides us, protects us, teaches us, and handles all the details. However, they are not called to do that forever, as they are always teaching and empowering us for the future. They are also instilling in us a sense of trust and belief that just as Philippians 4:13 reminds us that, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

“Professor Gerhard Frost of Luther College tells this story: “Imagine you are walking through your neighborhood and you pass a house where the family is loading the car to go on vacation. There are three children all under the age of 5 in the minivan waiting eagerly for Mom and Dad to finish the last minute details.

You walk up to the minivan, poke your head in the window and ask: "Where are you going?" They don’t know. "What highway are you taking?" Wide-eyed they say they have no idea "Where are you going to have supper tonight?" Again no idea. Then you ask: "With whom are you going?" Their eyes brighten, "With Daddy and Mommy, of course!!" They answer!!

They didn’t know exactly where they were going, they didn’t know the way, they didn’t know where they would eat or sleep, but with whom they were going that they knew. That was all that mattered. They were going with Mommy and Daddy and Mommy and Daddy would take care of them, would provide for them would bring them to their final destination.

God doesn’t tell us all the answers about where we are going on the road of life, He doesn’t tell us all the details about how we will be taken care of, or what might happen to us along the way, but he does give us himself in the form of his son, Jesus Christ, to be our guide, the guide who leads the way, because Christ said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life."” (2)

“The whole goal and point of life, a gift from God, is simply to “be with,” and to “be in.” We are not or need never be alone. Not only alone in the universe, but alone within ourselves. No wonder Jesus was so happy and brought such joy to others merely by his being there in their midst! We can be and do the same! When we realize that God created us to have a relationship with him everything changes its perspective for us, because it is an eternal relationship that our Heavenly Father claims for us.” (3)

The training wheels are off! Go out there and share the good news! Thank God for the forever example we have in Jesus! Let us forever be reminded that Jesus has gone on before us to create a place for us, and that we can always ask of him and he will provide.

Amen.

**References**

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 "Jesus Sums Up His Teaching.”

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 The Way To The Father

 Contributed by Jay Winters on Jun 10, 2006

 Scripture: John 14:1-12

 Denomination: Lutheran

**John 14:1-14**

On the night that he is to be arrested, Jesus shares final words with his disciples. As the one through whom God is known, he promises to go before them and act on their behalf.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 1“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.”