

The Way

“Jesus said, “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.”

This Sunday we return to Jesus’ farewell discourse to his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. A question we might ask is why are we back to Jesus’ death? Aren’t we still celebrating Easter, haven’t we already traveled this dark road, why must we revisit it again?

The answer of course, is that soon we will be celebrating Pentecost, and in our tradition, Easter is fulfilled in Pentecost. We have traveled these last several weeks flush in the glow of the risen Jesus, but as Fred Craddock says, “We cannot shout ‘He is Risen!’ loud enough to sustain the exhilaration of Easter week after week.”

As the excitement of this great mystery gives away, we are once again back to the demanding reality of a world that wasn’t exactly unanimous in its appreciation of God’s glorious gift.

God gave us this brilliant and bright shining Son so that we might know God’s love, compassion, justice and mercy completely. But God underestimated our willingness to accept such a gift. A treasure such as this gift represents comes perhaps with too many strings attached.

But still, God’s love for us seeks us out, and our rejection of this love cannot, it seems, kill God’s hope that we might embrace the freedom and joy that this great love represents.

But now, because it is still Easter and because we are an Easter people, let’s take hold of the Joy and Truth that is at the heart of Jesus’ farewell to his closest followers.

It appears Jesus understands that it is hard to maintain an awareness of the God’s love in the midst of the everyday. We know that there are many things that conspire to keep us from perceiving God’s beauty, order, oneness, and mystery. Over the rattle and thrum of the world, we have to focus on truly hearing the call of the holy.

Jesus prayer, in John’s poetic prose, calls us to wake us up from the dull stupor that overtakes us when we listen to the world’s incessant messages of fear, division, war, and waste. This is the evil’s greatest tool---to wear us down slowly, to make us think there is no hope so that we will sleep walk into darkness.

But if you remember nothing else from this reflection, please remember this:

The Peace of God, the peace Jesus gives to us and the peace that passes all understanding is so strengthening, and so life giving that the evil one’s power can never extinguish it. Never doubt it. If we feel like we are in the grip of darkness or that hate is winning all we have to do is train our eyes and see God’s startling and gracious love everywhere.

Through Jesus we are invited to live in the presence of God. Or, to put it another way, both Jesus’ life and prayer invites us to live in such a way that we make God peace more present, both to ourselves and to others.

Our every word and every action, no matter how ordinary, can be performed in a way that makes God’s peace more present in this world. The grasping, fearful forces of this world will try to

trick us into believing that anxiety and fear is the only answer. But this is just a trickster's illusion because in truth, God's peace is present in every place, at every moment – it's only our perception that is clouded. Whatever we do to increase awareness of this reality is a courageous decision to take part in God's never ending love for the world.

Soon we celebrate Pentecost, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit we have the power to make God manifest in this world.

There is no trick; we simply remember all that Jesus taught us; he has shown us the Way. When we follow Jesus into all of the kinds and conditions of humanity that he asked us to see and heal, it is then that where he is, we may be also.

Grace and Peace, Stephanie+