

Today is the fifth Sunday of Easter, and this week we are in the Gospel of John yet again. The Reading for this Sunday is from John Chapter 14. On any given year, the beginning verses of John 14 are the most read Scripture in all the church. Although, it is only formally in the lectionary once every three years, never the less it is so common-place because it is one of the go to reading at almost every funeral. That being the case, I would bet even people who only grace the doors of the church at a funeral will recognize this text.

I suppose the frequency of this text is good for all of us, because if there is a text one should know, it is in fact this one. John Chapter 14 includes teachings central to the message of Christianity. In John 14 Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

I’m sure we all know this text by heart and the part about Jesus preparing a place in his Father’s mansion is no doubt a comfort to those who believe.

Yet even so, I am not all that surprised by Thomas’ question in verse 6. Jesus has just told the disciples that he is going to leave them and that they should not worry because He is going to prepare a place for them and furthermore, they know the way.

Thomas responded with a question I’m sure everyone must have been thinking. “Lord, how could I possibly know the way if you have not told me where you are going?”

One might have expected Jesus to say, “Well Thomas, it is out there, beyond the stars and beyond the galaxies. Thomas, it is a place called heaven.”

That is not what Jesus said. Rather than give him a geographical location, rather than pointing out the right direction or saying... “I’ll show you.” Instead he simply replied “I am the way.”

This is important because what separates you from God is not several billion light-years. For this reason, what we need is not a space shuttle or a map. What separates us from God is sin. And given that, what we need is a Savior. And as Jesus pointed out, we need Him because only He can deal with our sin problem.

I think when we search our consciences and admit the guilt we feel, it is obvious we have a sin problem, but to be fair, the solution is not obvious. Maybe so, but isn't that exactly why Jesus was sent... He was sent to explain to us our only Way back to God was through Him. That is exactly what Jesus was trying to tell Thomas in Chapter 14... What he was trying to tell Thomas and the disciples, even though they did not understand at the time, was that He was going to die for them and for us. Jesus' plan was to pay the price for all of humanity's fall into sin and that is the most basic belief of Christianity.

Last week, we considered a text from John Chapter 10, in it Jesus called himself the "gate." The inherent exclusivity of that metaphor is obvious... But today, Jesus' ascertain to be "the way" and "the truth" and "the life" takes John 10 even further. I have heard it said, John 14 the most exclusive passage in the Gospels... but let it be known, it is also one of the most inclusive.

Chapter 14 was recorded not just so Jesus could claim to tell the truth or even be the truth. Jesus wanted you to have the truth. He wants you to have the very truth through which every other claim for truth could be measured.

John Chapter 14 proves to be a bold statement in a world in which tolerance and acceptance dominates the agenda. Even so, there is no way to tone down the claims made by Jesus. John 14 forces us toward a decision. If Jesus is "the Way", "the Truth," and "The life", the implication is that Allah and buddha are not. That means, Mormonism and Jehovah's Witness are distortions. That means Atheism is wrong,

and agnosticism, even though it makes no such claims of anything, it is no better because sitting on the fence will just give you splinters.

Understand, John Chapter 14 is all about putting your faith in Jesus. Does it surprise you that Jesus proceeded to use the word Believe, in some form, 6 times in this short text? Already in verse 1, Jesus uses the word “believe” not once but twice. In both cases the word is an imperative, meaning it is a command. I think the best way I have found commentators render verse 1 into English is this: “believe in God, that is, believe in me.”

With those words Jesus is rendering himself as synonymous with God... This should not surprise us given the way the Gospel of John began. “In the beginning was the Word. The word was with God and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, do you ever watch the news and think to yourself “It is only going to get worse”?

It does seem that way, doesn't it? How many “well-crafted” plans of yours failed miserably, even when you worked hard to obtain them? As we scramble for solutions to all our problems, the text is calling for us to look to Jesus and have faith. Recognize that as we trust in God our spirits will be lifted and we will begin to see a new future and our hope can be restored. Even when it seems like things are getting worse, John 14 assures us the end is with Jesus... in paradise.

On this fifth week in Easter, even as we continue to progress in the awareness of our fallen nature, Chapter 14 are words of encouragement from Jesus himself to you today. Jesus says to you, “Believe in God, that is, believe in Me.” “In my Father's house are many rooms and I go to prepare a place for you.”

Even in a fallen world, Jesus Christ can give us hope and strength. He can restore hope to the hopeless and He can give strength to the weak. Most importantly, he can give to you forgiveness and life.

Ultimately, Churches and its leaders may not have all the answer to all your questions, but we do have beliefs and belief is a powerful thing. I'd go as far as to say that that beliefs can make the impossible possible. And perhaps that is why Jesus goes on to say in verse 12, "Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do."

It is as if he sneaks those verses in right at the end of the text... just as I am. What I find most astonishing, is that the disciples all seemed interested in Jesus leaving and where we was going. And none of them asked any questions about what he meant when he said, "You will do greater works than I."

Consider this, one night I awake in a cold sweat. My mind was racing as I tried to find meaning in the dark as I tried to catch my breath. And then it came to me and I remembered Jesus' words, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Suddenly I was at peace. And I knew greater works were yet to come. How about you.

Above all, "Believe in God, that is, believe in Me." And "You will do greater works than I."

In the grace of God, which surpasses all understanding, trust your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, Amen.