

The Fifth Sunday Of Easter (May 10, 2020)

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Lesson from Acts: Acts 17:1-12

Service of the Word: p. 38

Epistle: 1 Peter 2:4-10

453 vs. 1-3

Gospel: John 14:1-12

Psalm 33

Text: John 14:1-12

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Theme: "I Am Going To The Father."

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I. I am the way.

453 vs. 4, 5

II. I am the truth.

III. I am the life.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

John 14:1-12 Jesus says:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

Lord Jesus, comfort our troubled hearts this day with your holy word. As we walk the difficult road of life, show us the way, the way to the Father. As we search for the answers to life's difficult questions, show us the truth; that you are the Son of God, and our Savior. As we long for the assurance of salvation and the mansions of heaven, show us the life. Lord Jesus, show us yourself, for you have declared: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed, for whom Jesus has prepared a place in the mansions of heaven;

I see before me today troubled hearts, hearts that at this particular moment may not appear to be overly distressed, though some may feel the weight of a heavy burden today. But hearts that have often been troubled in the past, and will continue to experience times of difficulty as long as they remain in this world of sin.

You may be wondering, "Pastor, how do you know that my heart is often troubled?" I know because I know the heart of the one behind this pulpit, and I know your heart is not unlike mine. And I know the words of your Savior and mine, who says to those whose hearts he knows, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust

also in me."

Yes, our hearts easily become troubled when we see the problems in our world, the seemingly endless wars and strife; and in our own nation; immorality and wickedness everywhere we look. We see a disease that threatens us, our loved ones, everyone around us. We see economic tumbles, our savings lost, our financial security lost. We see record-breaking unemployment. And we will continue to see poverty, hunger and starvation the world over, and we wonder, "What will become of us." Then we look into our own hearts and find the same wretched filth that is the cause of all the woes in our fallen world, so that we must come here week after week, with troubled hearts confessing our sins.

Our hearts easily become troubled when we experience personal difficulties in our own lives; family problems, sickness, insecurities of many kinds, which all remind us that something is wrong; indeed, something is wrong with us.

But likely the time when our hearts become the most troubled is when we come face to face with death. Someone near and dear is snatched from us; we are reminded of our own approaching death, and in fear and terror we realize: "This is what we by our sins have deserved."

But Jesus tells us, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Why? Because he has the answer to our troubles, all of them. He himself is the answer. That answer is found in his simple words that we shall study today, "I Am Going To The Father." Those words may not at first sound all that extraordinary, though they are, as we shall see; and so are the three simple phrases that follow from that statement. Jesus says, "I am the way; I am the truth; I am the life."

Jesus' disciples had troubled hearts as Jesus spoke the words of our verses to them. It was Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus had just celebrated the Passover with them, at which time he instituted the Lord's Supper. Now they were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus would pray his fervent prayer, then be arrested, tried, and the next day condemned, crucified, dead and buried. The disciples were troubled because Jesus had spoken to them again and again of his coming death. He had told them, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer."

Jesus now consoles his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Strange as it may at first seem, Jesus consoles his disciples by telling them once again that he is leaving them, that he is going to die. Jesus is asking his disciples to rejoice and be glad that he is going to the Father, because this means their eternal salvation. "In my Father's house are many rooms....I am going there to prepare a place for you....You know the way to the place where I am going."

But the disciples were confused. Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" To which Jesus answered, "I am the way."

There was a way that Jesus had to go. He had to go the way of the cross, there to suffer the punishment for the sins of our world. It was only by way of the cross that Jesus himself could go to the Father. It was only by way of the cross that Jesus could prepare a place for us in the mansions of heaven, that sinners might enter clothed in his righteousness.

"I am the way." This is another one of those eternal "I am" statements of Jesus. Jesus is the way to heaven for us all. He is the way that can never fail. And he is the only way. Indeed many think that they have paved their own way to heaven, but they only show how ignorant they are of the way. Jesus says, "No one comes to the Father except through me." Many say that Jesus shows us the way to heaven by teaching us

how to live good lives, that we might thus earn our own salvation. But Jesus did not come to show us how, for we could never do it. Jesus came to do it for us. He says, "I am the way." It is only through Jesus' full and free forgiveness, that we unworthy sinners, clothed in his righteousness alone, can be acceptable to God and enter heaven. Then indeed our salvation is sure and certain.

Such comfort Jesus' disciples should have had. They should have had the calm assurance: "Tomorrow is Good Friday, our Lord is opening the door to heaven for us." Instead, the sadness and confusion of the moment robbed them of this comfort.

How often do we say with Thomas, "Lord, how can we know the way?" When we are overcome by some problem, sadness and gloom, we grope along as if lost on life's road and ask, "Why Lord, why is this happening to me. Where are you leading me?"

At such times there is only one way to turn, to your Lord who says, "I am the way." He has won heaven for you, and that's all that really matters in life. No problem, no pain, no trouble, be it ever so difficult, ever so distressing, ever so sad; nothing can change that all-important fact, that eternal "I am." Jesus says, "I am the way!" "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me," Jesus says.

To emphasize the certainty of our salvation, Jesus continues: "I am the truth." Immediately we think of Pilate's question the next day when "The Truth" was standing right in front of him. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" We think of those basic questions of life that all people ask in their search for truth: Where did I come from? What is life for? What is there after this life? Is there a God? What is he like? How can I be acceptable to him? These questions haunt people until they have the answer, and there is only one real answer -- he who says, "I am the truth."

Jesus had said earlier, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." What is truth? That Jesus Christ is true God, the Only-begotten Son of the Father, who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven. The first chapter of John's gospel declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And it goes on to say, "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." And it goes on to say, "No one has ever seen God, but the only begotten Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." We know God and can know God only through Jesus. Again, "No one comes to the Father except through me," he says.

Just as Thomas was unsure about the way, so Philip was unsure about the truth. He said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

We sense Jesus' disappointment as he answers, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

Jesus is true God with the Father. He had to be in order to pay the price for our sins and win our salvation; in order to be the way, in order to be the life. How sure and certain our Savior was on the night before he died that he would be successful in winning our salvation that he said, "I am the truth"!

Jesus assured his disciples, "from now on, you do know the Father and have seen him." The disciples were about to witness the suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. From these things they would know the Father; they would know the

heart of God; that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." They would know the truth, that God has won their salvation in Christ.

This is absolute truth, eternal truth that nothing can change. What is happening to Christianity in our world? So many falling away. So many distorting the truth. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me." Nothing is happening to the truth. Even if all others reject it, even if all others distort it, the truth still remains truth. God has won your salvation in Christ. His eternal "I am" must remain, "I am the truth."

For the comfort of his first disciples and for our comfort, Jesus also says, "I am the life." He who was about to die the next day said, "I am the life." Death would never hold its grip on Jesus. Indeed, in Jesus' death, death itself would die, for Jesus would rise from the dead, and in him we too will rise, as he declared before he raised Lazarus from the dead, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

Have you ever tried to imagine how gloomy and terrifying life must be for those who don't know Jesus, for apart from him there is only death and separation from God. In contrast to that, what eternal blessings our Savior has prepared for us. "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

On the Last Day Jesus will raise us from the grave to be with him forever in heaven, as his disciples were reminded again by angels when he ascended, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Just what heaven will be like is beyond what we mortals can comprehend. Jesus describes it in simple human terms that we can understand; a house with many rooms. The Bible often describes heaven in negated terms -- No tears, no sickness, no sorrows, no death -- because we cannot begin to grasp the positive fullness of the joy, bliss and glory that await us there. But one thing is always stressed. We will be with Jesus, who won heaven for us, who will take us there, as he says, "that you also may be where I am." On Maundy Thursday evening, after speaking these words to his disciples, Jesus would pray to his heavenly Father, and say, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." That prayer was for you, and that prayer was answered the next day, when he who said, "I am the life" won eternal life for you and for me on Calvary's cross.

When we hear someone describe another country, we can usually tell whether or not the person has actually been there by the authority with which the person speaks, and the first-hand knowledge and details that the person sets forth. So in these familiar verses, as Jesus tenderly comforts his disciples by telling them about his Father's house, we cannot help but realize that he's been there. He speaks so fondly of that house with many rooms or mansions. He gives the absolute assurance, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He knew, and he knew very well, because he had been there. Already before the world's foundation, he had spent endless ages in the eternal Father's house. It is the eternal Son of God who is our Savior. He is the way, the truth, and the life for you!

Amen.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word! Amen.