

John 14: 1-14 – Fifth Sunday of Easter – A – 14<sup>th</sup> May 2017

**Acknowledgments** – *Laughing Bird Liturgical resources, Nathan Nettleton, Laughingbird.net. - Tom Wright, John for Everyone Pt 2, chapters 11-21.*

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Yesterday I conducted a funeral for a very lovely gentleman...he was a Christian through and through...strong in his faith...outgoing in spreading God's word...a scripture teacher for some 20 years, and confident in God's promises.

Coincidentally or by divine providence, the scripture reading chosen by his family for his service was the very same as today's reading...from John 14.

In fact, it is one of the most commonly chosen for funerals.

This piece of scripture is such a common choice because it touches upon so many of the feelings experienced by grieving family and friends, and in a way, it offers an assurance that there is more to life than just this earthly existence.

The scene for this scripture...is the last supper, and in less than 24 hours, Jesus will die upon the cross, to atone for the sins of the world...Jesus knows it...but the disciples are not able to see it.

Jesus talks about finding peace for troubled hearts, about trusting in Christ, and about finding the way home.

And according to Jesus when you get home or when you get to His Father's house there will be room for everyone.

In fact, he is going there and he will prepare a place for them and according to Jesus... they should know where he is going!

Characteristically, Thomas is the brave one to ask the question...that everyone else is just thinking .....*"what do you mean we know the way...we don't even know where you are going!"*

Jesus replies... "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Within the much of the world today...this saying of Jesus has become one of the most controversial...

*"How dare he, people have asked. How dare John, or the church, or anyone else, put such controversial words into anyone's mouth. Isn't this the height of arrogance, to imagine that Jesus or anyone else was the only way?"*

We live in a pluralist world...which means that for the sake of social harmony all religious paths are equally valid.

Some Christians aggressively defend this statement of Jesus...like zealots they doggedly and fundamentally insist that everyone else should give up their own way of life and follow his instead...these zealots in delivering a forced message have sadly damaged the Christian reputation and many relationships.

How we deliver the message of Christ will be judged more on our public example of the way we live our life, than on what we say....and so you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him or her drink; and religious intolerance has a lot to answer for.

So, this scripture...I don't believe, gives license to assert the supremacy of Christian faith over other faiths, and it certainly does not say that there is more than one way to God...and that all faiths are therefore equally valid.

We now live in a time of cultural diversity...people searching for some sort of spirituality and many faiths vying for social recognition... and my and your attention!

No longer is the Christian world view the only world view people grow up knowing.

And the reality is that even though we are faced and live with such pluralism...Jesus is saying to each of us who identify with him... "I am the way, the truth, and the life. None of you comes to the Father except through me."

I think we can become preoccupied with defending our faith by somehow debating other faiths spiritual/godly credentials.

It is our job...simply put, to live faithfully the way we have been called to follow.

Faithfully following the way of Jesus will not make us hostile to people of other faiths or those who have no faith, but it will make us distinctly and boldly different from them, and sadly that may also draw some unwanted anger and hostility.

If we are confident and faithfully following Jesus, we will be radically hospitable people.

If we are confident and faithfully following Jesus...we will be starkly different in contrast to much of the world and the society that we live in...because like Jesus we would welcome others who are culturally different to ourselves... the stranger...the outcast... the refugee.

If we are boldly and faithfully following Jesus, we are serving others.

So the truth; (the reality of God's plan),... and the life through which we know and find our way, is Jesus himself; our example!

John's gospel differs from the other gospels in that it is the only gospel that describes at the last supper...the generous and humble nature of Jesus washing the disciple's feet... that action was an example for his disciples...and for us also.

And so, we have gathered here today unashamedly to faithfully follow Jesus and no other.

Traditionally we hear God's word...spoken to us each Sunday, and so I pray that in hearing God's word we are transformed and shaped into people distinctly different from other faiths...but compassionate and able to wash anyone's feet.

We will gather around this table as the body of Christ, in the power of his Holy Spirit, to glorify the father... so that we might be fed and strengthened and inspired to live according to Christ's example.

Whether other ways might also lead to God is none of our concern. Our call is to live the way, the truth and the life that have been made known to us in Jesus.

Simply put...If we dethrone Jesus, we will enthrone something or someone else instead.

As Christians we believe in the one true living God, the creator... the God of Israel... and that Jesus Christ is the revelation and the fulfillment of God's plan through his Son.

The truth, the life...through which we find the way... to the father and his house...for us, is in knowing Jesus himself. **Amen.**

*Let us pray:*

*Collect of the day...*