

5 Easter A 2011

Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 33:1-5, 15-16

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

The way, and the truth, and the life.
When he reveals himself in this way,
Jesus invites us to share
In the mystery of his life.

Picture him, if you will –
The young man at table with his friends,
Eating a last meal with them
Before he goes out into the night.
Knowing that the end is near,
He speaks to them from the fullness of his heart,
a heart that overflows
with the radiance of the divine life
he has welcomed into his very self.

The friends who gather with him
Love him,
But they do not understand him.
The puzzled, doubting Thomas,
Who always wants to grab the mystery
And nail its feet to the floor
So that he can touch it.
The sophisticated, Greek speaking Philip,
Who always believes that if only he could see,
He would understand,
And if he could understand,
Then his world would hold its ordered way.
And then there is the hot-headed, bumbling Peter,
Who believes he would die for his friend,
But will deny him instead.
And there are others
Who were surely there,
But their names and witness
Have dropped out of the story.
Mary Magdalene is there,
And she understands, perhaps,
But she has no place at the table
In the story as it has come down to us.
So Jesus is left with all these friends

Who love him, but cannot understand,
And still he speaks to them
From the fullness of his heart.

His heart has been troubled.
He knows the time has come,
And, being human,
He has been afraid, and sad,
And lonely.
But now the way is clear.
Since he lives in the way of truth,
He knows that what he is about to do
Will reveal truth, and make life new.

What he is about to do
Will reveal the full potential of human life,
made new by the indwelling of the divine.

Schooled by years of prayer
And practiced in works that flow from his compassion
He has become completely open
To the outpouring of love,
The love that is the radiant source of life.

That love lives in him,
And he lives in that love.
He is so enlivened by that love,
And that love is so palpable in him,
That they have become one.
They are completely at home in each other.

This is the love we long for,
The love we can imagine,
And hope for,
And even strive for.
For us, so far,
It slips away;
it only comes and goes.
He has found it,
And it has found him.

He is at home in love,
And love makes a home in him.
Since he lives in this truth,
How could he be afraid?
He tries to share this with his friends.

He tries to tell them
How to let go the trouble in their hearts,
As he has let his trouble go,
By opening his heart
To the living truth.

His friends can sometimes glimpse that way of love,
But cannot hold on to it
Any more than we can.
And so they ask him questions,
Questions that seem to demand concrete answers.
Where are you going?
How can we find the way?
Show us what you see –
That will be enough for us.

Since he loves them,
He wants to share the life he has found with them.
He can only try to express in words
The experience that cannot be contained in words –
The truth of his way of life.

The words he uses come from the tradition they share.
Grounded in this tradition,
He calls the love he knows his Father,
And himself he calls that love's Son.
He speaks of the Father's house
As the place where the divine
Can be found and known.
Drawing insight from the psalms,
He speaks of walking in the way of truth,
And seeing the way of life.

Way, Truth, Life.

One single, interwoven,
Co-inhering, indwelling mystery.
Not a set of things to be possessed,
Or a series of tasks to be performed,
But a way of being.

The disciples
Cannot help making the mistake
Of picturing truth
As an objective reality
That can be grasped and possessed.

They cannot help
Making the mistake
Of thinking that a way
Is a path with edges,
That leads in a particular direction.

And, naturally,
They believe that life
Is something you either have,
Or lose.

The mystery is beyond.
Jesus is free within the truth of this mystery,
And invites us
Into his living way.

How can we know his way?
How can we live in his truth?
How can we come to the house of love,
And make a home for love within ourselves?

How can we let go of all the anxious,
Angry, defensive, and threatening ways
Of trying to make sense
of what Jesus says to his friends,
“No one comes to the Father except through me”?

Some would argue that means
No one can find God except through Jesus.
I don't believe that has to be the case.

But I do believe that finding God,
Coming into life-giving relationship
With the source of life,
The living heart of creation
And the source of all that has yet to unfold,
Finding that heart of life
Can only happen
When we get ourselves out of the way.

There are many ways of getting out of the way,
Many traditions that teach that.
Jesus shares that wisdom
With many who follow the way of living truth.
Like them,

He understands
That the way that can be told is not the way.*

The way that is lived
Is the way,
And that is truth.

The way, the truth, and the life
Cannot be made into things
That we can grasp and hold
And keep for ourselves
And deny to others.

They come to life
As we enter life through them.

In the Christian household of faith,
We claim that we come to God
Through participation in the life of Jesus.

Many, many traditions revere Jesus as a sage who shows
How to follow this way.
They see a kinship between his way
And the way their sages show them.
They would agree that if we hope for life, abundant life,
We can find it by living as Jesus lived.

But we would, perhaps, say it differently.

For us he is more than an example.
For us,
Jesus is the way.
He is the truth,
And the life.
Living in the way of Jesus,
We can come to the source of life.

Can we hear in these words a promise
That carries within it no threat
To those who walk another way,
But only welcome
For those who share the journey?

For Christians,
He is the way.
His very name can have for us

The power of sacrament –
Prayer in his name
Brings us into the heart of life.
We share in him
Through the most basic stuff of life,
water and bread and wine.
His story told in scripture and tradition
Becomes our story.
We find our way to life
Through him.
This is true for us.

Other traditions have ways
Of living in the way.
There are many ways,
Many ways to know the way.
They lead to the source of life –
They are the source of life,
From which we come and to which we return.

In the house of life
There are many places to dwell.

Those who come to the source of life
Are in the way that Jesus is,
A way that cannot be told, but only lived.
And that's the truth.

* “The Tao that can be told is not an unvarying Tao.”