

5 Easter A 2020

John 14:1-14

Tell the truth, if only to yourself –
Where are you right now?
What does your life look like?
Do you see a way –
A way out or through?

Are you kind of over it?
Is your outrage meter stuck on red alert?
Outrage at mismanagement,
Failures of leadership,
The suffering of those who have no homes,
Who have lost their jobs,
Who die alone,
Who are separated from their loved ones?
Does a flood of nameless sorrow catch you unawares?
Are you weary to your bones?
Bored out of your tree?
Feeling guilty that you are not taking advantage
Of all the wonderful opportunities out there,
Including all the beautiful broadcasts from your church?
Are you wondering,
As things begin to change,
If you ought to be afraid all over again?

There is no fix for these things,
No map for a quick escape.
But there is still a way.

There is no avoiding the pandemic
And its sorrows.
It has been going on too long,
And there is no end in sight.
It dominates our lives,
Our conversations,
Our weird dreams.

For some, it means ruin.
For some, death.

For some, anxiety,
Want, anger.

This is no kind of life.
But there is still life.

There is a way.
There is truth.
There is life.

We who gather under the sign
Of Christ the life-giver,
Christ the truth-bearer,
Christ the way that can be seen and touched
And spoken and shared –
We who gather in the name of Christ
Have a gift to hold close –
and then offer to the world.
A way beyond. Truth to tell. Life that is really life.

No plague has ever stopped the way.
No discord has ever dimmed the truth.
No mass destruction has ever brought an end to life.

The way gives hope.
The truth inspires courage.
This life is a life of freedom –
Freedom from fear, freedom for love.

If you wonder,
How can we know the way,
If you are afraid, or stuck,
Or tempted to despair,
If you are weary, worn, and sad,
Remember this –
Jesus is still here.
Still waiting for us,
Still reaching for us.
There is no distancing from him,
If we ask him to come close.

How can we know the way?
We can start like this.
Let Jesus take his place
At the center of your world,
And see what happens.

For a few minutes,

Try calling on the name of Jesus,
The way, the truth, the life.
Refrain from saying the word pandemic.
Take it out of the center of your system.
Rob it of its power.
Yes, it can kill,
And devastate,
And separate.

But there is a truth bigger than this fact,
A truth bigger than all the lies.
There is a life that cannot be killed,
There is a way through every roadblock.

What does it mean,
What does it look like
To proclaim the way, the truth, the life,
At a time like this?
Will the way make enough tests?
Can truth find a treatment?
Can life discover a vaccine?
Aren't those the only solutions for this mess?
What does it mean,
To claim that something that doesn't change anything,
Changes everything?

Jesus can show us.
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
Changes everything.
For us,
As it did for Jesus.

We can't do it perfectly,
Or even, sometimes, very well,
But we can, once in a while,
Be good enough followers in the way of Jesus.

Look at Jesus in the moment of this gospel story.
He knows that his hour has come.
He has been afraid, and sad,
And lonely.

Now, though, the way is clear.
What he is about to do
In offering himself
Will reveal the full potential of human life,
made new by the indwelling of the divine
whose house has many dwelling places.

Dwelling in the house of God,
Years of prayer,
And works of compassion
Have opened Jesus completely
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 and love have become one.
They are completely at home in each other.

Since he lives in the truth of love,
How could he be afraid?
He tries to share this insight 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 of love –
A love that is unquenched and undiminished
Through suffering, and absence,
And fear.
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.

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

They come to life in us
As we enter life through them.
We can't hold onto this way of life,
As Jesus did,
But we can hold onto its truth,
And return, and return again, to the way.

Jesus became himself,
The way, the truth, the life,
Through living the way of love.
He prayed,
He reached across boundaries,
He blessed,
Shared, healed,

Rested,
Told stories,
And finally,
Made his life a witness
By giving it away.

These things –
Praying,
Reaching beyond boundaries,
Blessing, sharing,
Bearing witness –
Are things we can do.
They overcome fear.
They break down barriers.
They bring light into sorrow,
Meaning into emptiness,
Shake us loose when we are stuck.

Not all of us can do all these things,
Especially now.
I don't know what the worst challenge is for you,
In these troubled times –
I don't even know what it is for me.

But I do know this.
The worst parts of our life right now,
and the not-so-bad parts,
And the parts that have turned out to be gifts,
All of them fit easily within the way of love.
All of them are swallowed up by life.
There is no truth bigger than this truth.

Is this a way for you?
Is there any truth in it?
Does it seem like some sort of life?

It's hard to shift the center of our world.
But if, for a moment here and there,
You can invite Jesus into the center,
Let him be the way,
The truth, the life,
Then see if you return to this troubled world refreshed,
Or bearing a gift of hope,
Of courage.
See if you find a sense of freedom.
See if love wakes up.

We don't know where we are going,
Or how long this season will last.
But we know there is a way.

We don't always hear it,
But we know there is truth.

And though death is real,
And the threat of death has changed our world,
There is beyond death,
Bigger than death,
a house of life is open to all,
where there is room for everyone.