

5 Easter A 2017

John 14:1-14

How can we find the way,
In these wayward times?

How can we know the truth,
When the truth is clouded by falsehoods,
Shadowed by disregard,
Devalued and trampled?

How can we embrace
The life that is really life,
When so much else grabs our attention?

How can we find the way?
How can we know the truth?
How can we embrace life,
When we're lost in a world of lies and deception
That threatens to entrap us
And drag us down?

Whatever side we're on –
And for some of us,
It's not one side or the other,
But pulled back and forth
Depending on the issue –
Whatever side we're one,
We live now in a world defined by sides,
Entrenched on sides,
Embittered as we shout at each other
Across the great divide.
Is there a way around, or through,
Or beyond these divisions?

Whatever we believe,
Whatever we hold fast,
We live now in a world
Where words and facts are up for grabs,
Where meaning slips away,
And trust is breaking.
Is there a truth that still holds the world secure?

What kind of life is this?

For us, as Christians,
There is a simple answer,
If not an easy one.
Jesus.

We find the way,
Know the truth,
Embrace life
When we remember
The way, the truth, and the life
are not things we can grasp,
But a person we can encounter –
A person who will befriend us
And walk beside us
And set our hearts on fire.

There are many way to confront the present time.
For all of us,
No matter what we believe,
No matter whom we support,
We are tossed and tumbled,
Shaken up and at least a little lost.
How do we meet the challenge of the moment?

There is the way of loyal opposition.
The way of vocal support.
There is the way of prophecy and protest.
There is the way of violence,
And the way of apathy.

And then there is the way
Of the one who says,
At the darkest hour,
I am the Way.
And that is our way – the way of Jesus.

Our way is to be Christians –
To let our reflections,
Our reactions, our actions
Be shaped and guided
By the one who is the way, the truth, the life.

If we look at Jesus,
And really see him,
Then we see through him
To the divine source of all that is,

The one he called Father.

The one with whom he was in intimate,
Ongoing, life-giving relationship.

If you want to be in relationship with God
As Jesus was in relationship with God,
Then you watch who Jesus is
And what he does.

There are many ways to the God
Who is beyond our knowing
And yet always right here,
Many wisdom teachers
From many lands and many times
Who reveal the truth.
Who speak truth in words
Much like the words of Jesus.
There are Jewish prophets and Muslims mystics,
Buddhist teachers
And Greek philosophers
Who speak as Jesus speaks.
When we honor these wisdom teachers,
of many traditions,
We honor our own wisdom teacher.

Jesus is our way.
Our wisdom teacher
Who leads us to truth,
Who offers life.
Not only through his words:
It is his self-offering, holy-making gift of his life
That opens a new way.

We who want to be inclusive,
Who want to be part of a wide and generous world,
Need to take a deep, prayerful breath here,
And let go our anxiety and fear
About what he says next.

We could become so afraid when Jesus says,
No one comes to the Father except through me,
That we run away from the gift he offers,
Which is the way to life
By hearing his truth.

This is our way to life.
If we are followers of Jesus,
Then our way to the source of life
Is through him.

All through this Eastertide,
We hear this invitation in different ways.

First, the encounter with Mary of Magdala,
His dearest friend,
Who knows him when he calls her by name.
Don't hold me,
He says to her,
Go – tell the news
That I am going on from here
To be one with the source of life.
Come and find me where I am now.

Next, the encounter with Thomas,
Who is always asking questions
And always of two minds.
Don't make it so complicated, Jesus says.
Touch me, and know –
I am the same friend you knew,
And yet more so.

Then, the encounter on the road,
With the woman and man
Whose hearts are set on fire
When they understand
That he is their friend,
But greater and wider and wilder
Than they ever knew.
Whose hearts are transformed
When they know him
In the breaking of the bread.

Then, the promise to his friends
Gathered to hear his voice.
I am your shepherd.
Listen, trust, follow.

This is the one who holds for us the promise and the hope.
The one who is the way
Through the tangle of the times.

The one who is the truth
When it seems the truth could die.
We know he was killed,
And lives forever.
And so we know
The truth will live.

The one who is life.

Life is uncertain,
If it's all about us.
Things done and left undone,
Choices, decisions,
Loyalties, disappointments.
We cannot ever know
If we are acting rightly,
If we should regret the past
Or fear the future.
Caught between the pain of what is
And the glory of what could be.
This is our life,
When we're on our own.

But if we let life be
About the one who is life,
Then nothing could be more certain and sure.

So how do we live,
In these times?

Let the beginning and the end
Be the one who is life.
Step back from the moment and reflect.
Turn away from the news for a while.
Stop wondering what will happen next.
It is important, vitally so.
But it is not the essence of life.

If we let the news be the way,
If we let the turmoil of now be the truth,
If we let everyday life be our life,
Then we are stuck
In an endless cycle
Of anxiety and fear,
Recrimination and failed reconciliation.

This is no way to live.

If we look beyond,
Within,
Below,
Then we find the one
Who is the story.

There is more than enough news.
Some good, more than enough bad –
Whatever your opinion or side or stance.

But for us,
Who gather in the name of Christ,
There is only one piece of best news
That matters most.

The Jesus who broke bread
With friend and stranger,
Who reached out hands of love
To heal the outcast and oppressed,
Who spoke words of hope and healing
To those who had been told they were worthless,
Who ate and drank and laughed and wept
Just as we do,
This Jesus who walked among us
And was killed by those
Who wound and crush the will to freedom
And the flame of hope,
This Jesus who was killed
Could not be kept under a rock,
Dead in a tomb.

This Jesus is alive and lives forever,
The anointed one,
The Christ of God.

What does that mean,
Today?

It means,
Nothing that happens can destroy us.
Nothing that happens can quench the flame of hope.

Nothing can block the way.
Nothing can cloud the truth.

Nothing can come between us and the source of life.

The way of life is open,
Now and forever.

This is the truth.