

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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QUESTIONS ANYONE?

The Rev. Andrew F. Kline

Text of the Sermon preached the Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 10, 2020

ACTS 7:55-60 | PSALM 31:1-5, 15-16

1 PETER 2:2-10 | JOHN 14:1-14

On that final night Jesus was with his disciples, he said: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.”

There was indeed a great deal to be troubled about. Jesus had just washed his disciples feet. He spoke plainly that some would betray him, others deny him. He broke bread with his betrayer. And there were so many questions, anxious questions. In every seat around him confusion, dishonesty, fear that would feed the betrayal, denial, corruption, violence – and the death yet to come.

At that pivotal moment, just before many of them would never see him again, his message was: You are going to need faith to get through what is coming.... Any questions?

Then, this promise. One so profound we remind ourselves of it often at times like these, when there is so much suffering, confusion and death all around us: “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”

If we could read his thoughts: “In this time when you sense you are losing everything dear to you, not to worry, there is a place for you. But we often stop there. There is more. NOT ONLY is there a place for you. In this time of impossible trial, I AM WITH YOU. I will be with you always.” I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

These remarkable and famous words often stop the conversation. Because we often are thinking about those who, for whatever reason, don’t see Jesus as their ride through the storm, we leave the conversation before it is over. True, Jesus says, I am your Way to the Father, to the place we all need to get to. But I have much more to say.

I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU TO DO.

What is remarkable about this moment, for us especially, is that Jesus chooses to open a dialogue – a deep purposeful conversation – about how we friends and allies of Jesus are going to need to change, as everything changes around us.

The conversation continues with twenty questions. And I say: Thank you Thomas and Philip for asking questions! Thank you Thomas being direct and sticking to the basics. “Lord, is there really a map here? Or are we on our own? Specifics please!”

And I thank Philip for showing us what it is like when we get a little lazy, when we go too fast. Philip says: “Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Really? He should have framed it as a question: “Will we be satisfied if you show us the Father?” Obviously not, because you have already seen the Father and you not in a good place.

So Philip, what is it that you really need to know? Can you ask a better question? The certainty that allowed you to get through other tight spots without paying too much attention, probably will not work for you now.

Jesus continues: “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I will do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.... I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

Now that is a turn in the road. “In my name” means “in my Presence.” Think about that curious ancient phrase “to ask in the name of” someone. It takes some work, to get oneself in the company of someone who can grant your wish, to frame your petition, to pay attention to your request.

Jesus says: As you are with me, ask me anything! Why do we miss this?!

So my friends, what questions do we have today for the one who holds our lives in his hand? What petitions. What requests.

Let’s think. What do we need to see and to know?

To have faith right now is to wage a struggle on two fronts.

On one hand, we are successfully staying inside, keeping older and more vulnerable people alive.

On the other hand, because our systems and economy are slowly unraveling, there are more people than ever in serious need. And none of us can yet guess what the final cost of lost livelihoods and relationships will be.

So my friends, from where we sit, we might even ask what we need to do?

We need to trust, that if we open our hearts and minds and bodies to believing, the Holy Spirit will be given to us. We need to trust means that the questions we ask in faith will be answered by a loving God.

Try this. Try walking into your worst case scenario and listening for these words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

There will be comfort for the afflicted and dying. (Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe!)

Generous hearts will be awakened and respond to those in need. (Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe!)

Hard working, selfless, dedicated, spirit filled individuals, will staff and work our hospitals and keep our communities secure. (Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe!)

Brilliant minds, some inspired directly by the Holy Spirit, are seeking for the vaccines and procedures that will keep us from dying and help heal us as communities. (Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe!)

For God's Holy Spirit hovers upon the face of every thoughtful question, the questions that are asked in times like these, that are framed as requests before God. Such questions bring life, health, strength, truth, comfort and a way forward in our world. God is always at work in us, if we could just see it. Just trust it.

This is the kind of faith we need on all fronts. I find this kind of believing in the apostle when he says: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

Have we tasted that the Lord is good?! Do we know it in our bones?! Well, if so, there is more there still. Come, drink up. As we say every day before we begin handing out bags at our feeding ministry: "God is good! All the time! All the time! God is good!"

Making this public witness really does make a difference, especially if we can connect it to that longing in our heart for the pure goodness of God. I pray we know what "God is good" means. And that we know we mean it "all the time."

Today we are invited to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus, a new dependence on faith itself.

The time for mindlessly saying to one another, "Cheer up!", is surely passing. The time for saying, "Believe! Ask! Seek! Knock!", is upon us.

Consider today what you will ask of the Father in Jesus' name. And trust in Jesus' promised reply. And then go and share it!

Amen.