

Fifth Sunday of Easter + The Way, Truth & Life



Read: John 14.1-14

Reflection

Andrew arrives in a foreign city where his father is critically ill in hospital. He's had no time to prepare for the journey and has only a rough idea where the hospital is. He doesn't speak the language of the city or understand its transport system. He stares at a wall map and can see the marker that says, "You are here". It's a start! But suddenly the whole situation overwhelms Andrew. Someone comes and stands beside him, speaking his language and asking if she can help in any way. There's something very reassuring about this person, so Andrew explains what's happening and, to his surprise, the stranger says, "I live here, and I know my way around. Would you like me to go with you to the hospital and make sure you find your dad once we get there?" Andrew gratefully accepts the stranger's offer, instinctively trusting her, and his trust is well placed: they arrive at the hospital and find Andrew's father and the stranger-friend then says she will return in an hour, leaving Andrew comforted and reassured at a distressing and frightening time of his life.

Our Gospel reading takes us 'back in time' to the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday. It's been a strange, distressing evening for Jesus' disciples, who are in need of comfort and reassurance. There was the foot washing and Jesus predicting that one of them would betray him; then Judas left abruptly and Jesus said that he himself would soon be going away without them. To top it all, Jesus is now predicting that Peter, of all people, will deny knowing him. No wonder their hearts are troubled and they can't understand what Jesus says about preparing a place for them in his Father's house.

When Jesus says that they already know both where he is going and the way there, Thomas surely speaks for all of them when he says that since they don't know the destination they can't possibly know the way.

It's within this place of confusion and lack of understanding that Jesus says to his disciples, and to us, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," and "believe... in me." Jesus offers his disciples his life and his way of living as our guide, his words of truth to be trusted whatever happens in an unreliable and unsafe world, and a life lived in such union with him that we will always be where he is and that is with the Father – we can never be anywhere else.

All of us at some time need this sort of comfort and reassurance – perhaps more so now than ever in the new reality of our Covid-19 world. We need someone to meet us in that place and offer guidance, love and understanding. The good news is that Jesus always meets us where we are and offers himself to us as our way, our truth, and our life.

He is our way: Being a disciple of Jesus is about looking to him for guidance and help. We don't have to live by a rule book or pass exams to qualify for discipleship. Our scriptures are, of course, very important, but when we look at what Jesus says and does, we see what those scriptures look like when lived out in the world. And we begin to know the joy and freedom of living the way that God intends us to live without being bound by rigid rules and regulations.

He is our truth: Jesus says that as we get to know him, we will also be getting to know his Father, who is our God and Father too. Jesus reveals to us God in human form; he shows us who God, our creator and redeemer, truly is, and that God's love and compassion will never let us down.

He is our life: Jesus always meets us where and how we are. He stands alongside us, offering to accompany us and helping us to learn the ways of love and how to live in God's eternal kingdom.

The arms of this friend are held out ready to welcome us home to the place prepared for us before time began. We have only to say "yes" to the invitation...

Prayer Eternal God,
 whose Son Jesus Christ
 is the way, the truth, and the life:
 grant us to walk in his way,
 to rejoice in his truth,
 and to share his risen life;
 who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
 Amen.