

Easter V: Year A; 9/ 10 May 2020  
St. James' Episcopal Church, Clinton NY  
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This month, this year, our lives have been changed, forever.  
It is uncharted land. But, we have our road map; it is call Love.

Acts 7:55-60  
1 Peter 2:2-10  
John 14:1-14  
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

This weekend marks the Fifth Sunday of Easter. This weekend also marks the seventh week of the New York State Covid-19 pandemic pause; when life as we knew it changed. Seven weeks of pause: seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost—seven. For readers of the Bible, the number seven carries great weight. When you hear the number “seven” that’s a pointer to something significant: seven—significant. But for me, and maybe for you, these seven weeks have had a different kind of weightiness, a feeling of unease, burdensome and heavy. We find ourselves at the fuzzy boundary. Do we venture out more? Will Central New York “open up” earlier than the rest of the state? Who do we feel comfortable visiting, and how long will we wear masks?

I image that those first disciples of Christ, during those “seven weeks” between Easter and Pentecost Sunday, went through a similar time of fuzzy uncertainty. True, Mary Magdalene and the other Marys had seen their Risen Lord in the Garden. Others had walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Jesus came back to the Upper Room, twice, the second time so that Thomas could also “see” that the Lord truly was back. But, it seems, mostly the disciples keep coming back to the Upper Room, waiting for something, waiting, and thinking; reconstructing for each other what they remember of the time just before the Crucifixion, what they remember of life as they knew, before all had changed.

From their remembering, we hear two often read passages: First this:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye (who) believe in God, believe also in me.  
In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.  
I go to prepare a place for you.”<sup>1</sup>

And then this

Jesus said (to them), I am the way, and the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me.”<sup>2</sup>

The first passage is often read at funerals. It is meant to give comfort to those facing the death of a loved one. The second passage has been used to give comfortable assurance to those who believe, and also, sadly, as a test to determine who is a believer; “no one comes to God except through Jesus” so “have you been saved?” and “Do you confesses Jesus as your Lord and Savior?” or in the language of my youth “Have you been born again (repented of your sins and been wash by the blood of the Lamb)?” But as we continue to learn, to take a line of scripture out of its context is often to do injustice to the very scripture that we treasure.

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:1-2 (KJV)

<sup>2</sup> John 14:6 (NIV)

In this reading from the Gospel of John, we are back in the Upper Room before the Crucifixion. It is Maundy Thursday. Jesus has wash his Disciples feet. He has broken bread. He has told them that one of them will betray him and that another will deny knowing him, three times before the start of the next day. Jesus is telling them that the world as they know it will never be the same. Because of what happens this night, this month, this year, their world will never be the same. Our world will never be the same.

And so Jesus says

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe. Believe in God. Believe in me. <sup>3</sup>

Put your trust in God, the God who has room for all of you. Follow my lead. Walk in my footsteps, says Jesus, the Christ, God Incarnate, God made Manifest.

Bold words, confusing words, to which the ever so human Thomas replies:

“Lord, we do not know where you are going.  
How can we know the way?”<sup>4</sup>

Thomas asks out loud the very thing we ourselves might want to ask, if we were bold enough to do so. Lord, we want to follow you, but we need a road map. To be successful in our quest, we need Mapquest! We need the Google map. And because we know there will be many things in our pathway; maybe we need the GPS Waze app. And Jesus replies:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me.”<sup>5</sup>

I am the way; remember what I have done, and do likewise.

I am the truth; I have revealed to you the inequalities of this world; open your eyes, and do something about this.

I am the life; your life has been changed. Your world has been changed. And my promise to you is that in this change, your life has been made anew.

You have the roadmap. It is not a secret treasure map, hidden away, and given only to a select few. Jesus tells his friends.

(for since) you know me, you know my Father also.  
And you know God and (so you) have seen God.” (paraphrase) <sup>6</sup>

What is revealed to us in this fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according the John is that we already know how to live our life, today, this month, this year, and onwards.

Jesus’ mission on earth was to make God known; to reveal who God is. All the words Jesus spoke, all the work Jesus did, is of God. Jesus, the cornerstone of our faith, reminds us that God is our refuge, our strength and our guide.

In good time, the disciples will leave the upper room, first to follow Jesus to Gethsemane, then they will leave the upper room at Pentecost. In good time, our nation will slowly start open up. We will start having more in-person meetings, in small groups, probably still wearing masks, and keeping some physical distance. We will want roadmaps, guidance on what we can do, and what we should avoid. As prudent people, gifted with skill and reason, we should pay attend to we need to do to keep protecting those most venerable among us.

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<sup>3</sup> John 14: 1 (NSRV)

<sup>4</sup> John 14: 5 (NSRV)

<sup>5</sup> John 14: 6 (NSRV)

<sup>6</sup> John 14: 7

But this is all very new to all of us. Some of us may feel that we have been flung into a wilderness, trying desperately to figure out what path to take. But remember, these words.

“Let not your heart be troubled” <sup>7</sup>

God is with us, comforting us, working in and through us. It may not be easy to see. Our deeds may not seem very specular. But whenever there is healing, whenever we work to care for all people, God’s presence is there. This month, this year, our lives have been changed, forever. It is uncharted land. But, along with Thomas, Philip and the other un-named disciples who wait in the Upper room, we have our road map; it is call Love.

**AMEN**

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<sup>7</sup> John 14: 1 (NSRV)