

I am the way

John 14: 1-14

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Don't let this throw you', Jesus says. 'You trust God, don't you? Well, trust me. In my Father's house are many rooms. There is plenty of room for you. If it were not so, I would have told you. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? And, if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so that you can live where I live.'

These are words that many of us know well, as it's a text frequently read at funerals, and they are words that Jesus says to his disciples during the Last Supper on that last night when they were all together. Already Jesus has washed the disciples' feet and told them what this means. He's told them that one of them will betray him and Judas knows that Jesus knows it's him. He's told them all that he won't be with them for much longer, and that where he's going, they can't come. And he's also told Peter, in front of all the others, that before the rooster crows, Peter will disown him three times.

It's not been a good night so far and it's no wonder that the disciples are troubled, distraught even. Their beloved teacher is leaving them, one of their own has turned against him, and the most committed leader among the disciples is said to be on the cusp of a great failure of loyalty. It's as though the rug has been pulled out from under them.

Jesus responds to the anxiety of his disciples by saying, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust God don't you? Well, also trust me"*. He calls them back to this fundamental relationship of trust and assures them that he is not abandoning them. Rather, he is returning to his Father, which is good news for them. And why is it good news? Because it's also *their* destination. There are many rooms in his Father's house, and he goes to prepare a place for them, so that they will be with him and the Father forever.

To have a place in heaven reserved for us is one thing, confidence in getting there is quite another. When Jesus says that they *know* the way to the place where he is going, Thomas, like most characters in the Gospel, takes Jesus quite literally. He wants directions, a road map to this place, *'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'* And Jesus responds with words that many of us learnt years ago at Sunday School – *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'*.

I don't know about you, but I'm really glad that my car has a built-in Sat-Nav, because I'm really hopeless in following directions and I get stressed when I get lost, because I don't know the Cambridge roads well enough to get back on track. So, when I'm travelling to somewhere I've not been before, I do two things. Firstly, I make sure I've got the postcode to the destination so that I can pop it into the Sat Nav. And the second thing I do is write on a post-it note something that will help me find the house I'm going to. So, for the last journey I went on to Ely, the person I was visiting said, *'It's the middle house in the cul-de-sac, with coloured glass in the door and with two hanging baskets out the front.'* So, on my post-it I wrote 'Middle house – coloured glass – hanging baskets'. The post-it gets stuck on the dashboard and, together with the Sat-Nav, guarantees that I find my way.

What I love about Sat-Navs is that even when you don't follow their directions, or you take a wrong turn by mistake, they do their best to get you back on the right track. Ours helpfully says, *'If possible, do a U-turn'*, or *'Turn back at the next roundabout.'* The Sat-Nav's job is to get me to my destination by the most direct route. It will tell me when I've gone wrong, and will offer suggestions as to how I can get back on the right road and continue my journey to arrive safely at my destination.

Now, that suspiciously sounds a bit like our Christian journeys. We have the Bible - the best Sat-Nav known to man - which tells us how to live God's way. We're encouraged to read our Bibles every day and there are useful commentaries and Bible notes to help us make sense of what we're reading and understand its relevance to our lives today. Sometimes, a Bible verse or passage will speak directly into a situation we're going through – it might be an area of life that we're struggling with or getting very wrong; we might have lost our way or gone off track. But, together with prayer, God's word can help us work out what to do next, or confirm a step we've already decided upon. I love it when that happens. When you find a verse that really helps, it can be good to write it down on a post-it note and put it somewhere you can easily see, to remind yourself of its truth for you. Just like that post-it on the dashboard, a little reminder to help you stay on track.

Despite Jesus' reassurance to Thomas that he does indeed know the way because he knows Jesus, it's Philip next in our passage who needs more convincing. When Jesus says that if they know him, then they know the Father too, Philip blurts out, *'Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.'* Jesus' response demonstrates his patience with these disciples who are still not getting it: *'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not*

know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father'. Look at me and you are looking at the Father. If you can see me, then you can see him.

This is the whole of Jesus' mission, to make known the Father, to reveal who God is. Jesus, who came from the Father and is now returning there, is the fullest revelation of the person and character of God. If we want to know who God is, we need look no further than Jesus. All the words that Jesus has spoken, all the works that he has done, come from God and show us who God is. The God with whom we are going to spend eternity, with Jesus. Because Jesus promises his disciples, troubled as they were at the time, that that's where they're going. That's their final destination. But, until then, there's a lot more living to do on earth. And what will they be doing while they're waiting? The answer is in verse 12: *'I tell you the truth,'* Jesus says, *'Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. They will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.'*

In these troubled days of Coronavirus, we see a lot of people doing what Jesus did. In the food parcels given out through the Foodbank; through prescriptions and shopping collected and dropped off; errands run; and telephone calls made, particularly to those who are on their own and are isolated. The purpose of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples was to demonstrate what it was he wanted *them* to do after he was gone. *'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you,'* Jesus says.

And we can do these things because, as we know, after Jesus returned to his Father, he sent the Holy Spirit. Wherever we see healing, reconciling, life-giving work happening, we know that this *is* the work of God through the Spirit.

So, like the disciples, let's be reassured by Jesus' words. Let's use them as our Sat-Nav as we navigate our way through life, particularly in these uncertain times. Let's commit to hear words that have brought us comfort in the past, knowing that they will do so again. And let's trust in the Holy Spirit to draw us close to God the Father, through Jesus the Son. *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life',* Jesus said, *'And I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.'* Amen.