

Gospel Reading John (14:1-7)

¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In 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? ³And 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. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."



Bless. Jesus is telling the disciples about the big picture; the meta-narrative; the zoomed-out version of their reality. Disciples, in the gospels, do all sorts of extraordinarily ordinary, human things. They question, they doubt, they fear, they grumble, they question, they fall asleep

when they're supposed to be awake, they drown when they should be trusting, they betray, they desert. And here today, they are staring at their feet and their hands, blinded by their myopic obsession with the trees rather than grasping the splendor of the forest.

The gospel, according to the disciples, is as clear as mud. They know that they are supposed to follow this Jesus. And they try, they really do. But it is, to be blunt, terrifying. Drop your fishing nets, cast aside the security of your income, for the sake of the unknown? Bless their hearts, really. Jesus speaks in parables, instructs them to feed mobs of hungry people with meager remnants of fish and bread from one basket. He really wears them out.

They know enough about him to follow him. They see enough to suspect he speaks with authority bred from spiritual alignment with God. He exudes calm and compassion, bravery and boldness, humility and steadfastness. Jesus touches untouchables, sees the unnoticed, rants at the religious elite, and loves the lepers. Eats with sinners, talks to an adulteress, the list is long of the downtrodden that Jesus lifts up by his mere attention and presence. But it breaks down, wears them down. They are so tired of the constant confusion.

They have moments of clarity and peace and trusting beyond themselves. And then they have moments of doubt and fear and worry. It's a rollercoaster. And it's *exhausting*.

Today Jesus is telling them what's coming. He's going on. To prepare their place. They will know the way. They must trust, they must not be afraid. Just remember: believe.

Thomas pipes up with very, very legitimate points. He is at least frantic if not downright panicked,

“We do not know where you are going!!! How can we know the way?!”

(Unfortunately, there is no punctuation in our Greek manuscripts. My own inference is to add here the emphasis of the urgently perturbed and desperately seeking.)

An eternal house with thousands of rooms, prepared for us by Jesus Christ himself... we can't afford to miss that memo. Where is it? And how in the world do we get there? It sounds magnificent. It sounds like community and communion. We want *that*.

The commands Jesus gifts to the disciples here are “**do not let your hearts be troubled**” and “**believe**.” Thomas doesn't really hear; he's preoccupied with how little he KNOWS. He wants a little more control; he prefers to have at least one hand on the steering wheel, he wants to see the road winding ahead so he makes sure he doesn't miss something important, road signs maybe. Otherwise, how are we sure we are going the right way???

Jesus responds.

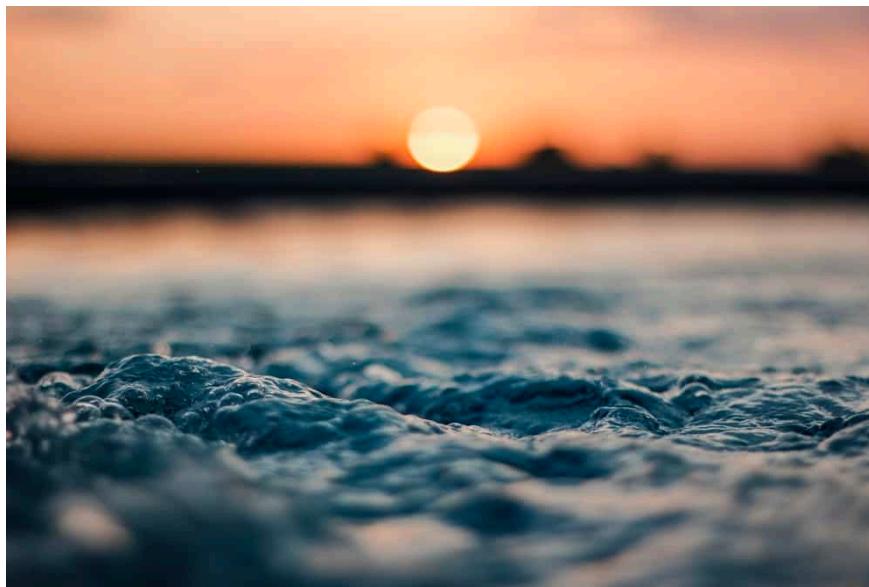
“I am the way, the truth and the life...
if you know me, you know my father also.
You DO know him and have seen him.”

Jesus has told them he goes ahead and prepares. We are not to worry, we are not to let our hearts quake or quiver. We are to believe. What are we to believe?



I think this discourse is about far more than believing Jesus is the son of God. Or about checking the boxes to get into heaven. We are to let go of our obsession with *knowing*. Believing is not something we “figure out” with our minds. There are so many decisions to make that require intense cerebral fretting and analyzing:

- When is the appropriate time to re-open the country?
- How do we balance safety from the virus and safety that is job security for our economy?
- What does the Church say in the face of an unprecedented closure of the world?
- Are we acting out of fear? Are we acting responsibly and out of precaution?
- When can we KNOW more about the virus? How it spreads? Why it takes who it does?
- Why haven’t we found a vaccine?
- How do we cope with not being able to be with those we love who suffer in isolation?



DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS

BE TROUBLED?

BELIEVE?

Easy for Jesus to say

...

Our hearts are troubled because our minds are racing and our panic calls for the ways we cope to become amplified: paralyzed by fear or being overly productive to deny reality. We must still our whirling minds and our controlling thoughts. We do have to make decisions. We do have to adhere to tough calls by our leaders. We do have to act in ways we judge to be faithful based on our circumstances. But our Lord tells us before, during, after, and beyond ALL of that obsessive thinking, we are to sit still. And believe. Not with our

minds. With our hearts. With the peace that passes all understanding, given us in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7)

Jesus has prepared a place. We know the place. But we don't know how to get there. We don't know what speedbumps lie ahead. We. Aren't. Supposed. To.

The way, the truth, and the life come when we stop micro-managing. When we stop overthinking. When we stop pretending that we control this journey or this saga. We tried to control the intake of knowledge in Eden, the height of the bricks in Babel, and the chaos Jesus stirred up through his ministry. We like to imagine we are the makers of our own destiny and the agents of our own wealth. Our knowledge and our egos are NOT the way, nor the truth, nor the life. That is Jesus' work in God. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe. You DO know him and have seen him. Amen.