

Sermon for Fifth Sunday of Easter

Date: May 3, 2020

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

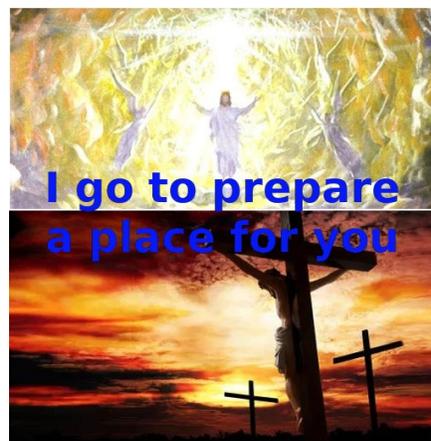
First Reading: Acts 6:8–9; 7:2a, 51–60

Epistle Reading: 1 Peter 2:2–10

Gospel Reading: John 14:1–14

Sermon Text: John 14:1–14

Sermon Title: Where Did Jesus Go?



Introit: Psalm 95:1-3,6-7a; Antiphon: John 10:14,15b

Hymns:

LSB 645 – Built on The Rock the Church Shall Stand

LSB 644 – The Church's One Foundation

LSB 861 – Christ be My Leader by Night as by Day

Liturgy:

Divine Service: DS I, p. 151



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Text: John 14:1–14

[Jesus said:] “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. 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, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our risen, living, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

When someone is invited to your house as a guest you usually prepare. You clean, straighten things up, pick up, dust and vacuum. Maybe you buy some special food and drink. You want to make sure things are just right for your guests.

When you heard the words of Jesus in today's Gospel reading telling us He is, "going to prepare a place for us¹" maybe that is what you thought: Jesus going to Heaven to prepare for our arrival, to ensure everything will be ready for the Last Day when Jesus comes again to, as He said, "take us to be with Him where He is."²

That may prompt some questions like: What exactly needs to be done in Heaven? What's taking so long? If God could create the universe and everything that exists in just six days why does Heaven need to be prepared? What is Jesus talking about here?

Jesus had told them a many times. He said He was going to the cross for the sin of the whole world. He was going just as it had been written about Him in the Old Testament:

- That He would be the Suffering Servant.³
- That He would be lifted up from the earth on the cross.⁴
- That He would be the sacrificial Lamb provided by the Father.⁵

This is how Jesus was going to prepare a place for us. It wasn't that Heaven was lacking anything it's that we did. Jesus was now going to do what was necessary to provide a place for us in Heaven, through the forgiveness of our sins on that cross. That is why He came.

That's why Jesus tells us, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."⁶ He means believe what you are about to see.

- Believe when you see Me arrested.
- Believe when you see Me whipped and beaten.
- Believe when you see Me hanging on the cross
- Believe when you see Me laid in the tomb.
- Believe the Word of God, that tells you I am doing all this for you.

To prepare a place for you, with Me, in Heaven.

1 John 14:2
2 John 14:3
3 Isaiah 53
4 Numbers 21
5 Genesis 22:8
6 John 14:1

Jesus is going to prepare a place for us and when “it is finished.”⁷ He says, “I will come again.”⁸ That is what we are celebrating during these fifty days of Easter! It’s not just a reference to Jesus’ coming again on the Last Day. Jesus isn’t waiting that long to come again. He came again already on the third day to give His disciples the peace and forgiveness won by Him on the cross. He came to give them the joy and peace they needed; to give them life and hope. Starting then and continuing until the the Last Day.

There’s even more to it than that. Not only are we no longer separated from the Father, but Jesus goes on to say that “if we know Him, we know the Father;” if “we see Him, we see the Father.” It is through the cross that we know God fully. It is not through creation, not through miracles, not through feelings, emotions or experiences. It is on the cross we see and know His love, His mercy and compassion, His wrath against sin, and His forgiveness for us. You cannot see Him more clearly, or know Him more fully than on that cross.

The problem is, we don’t expect to see God that way. We don’t expect Him to be working that way. It seems wrong, it seems backward. We think like Philip “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Philip wants, what we want, to see the visible evidence. We say to God:

- If our Church teaches what is right, show us by packing the pews.
- If I believe what is right show me by answering my prayers.
- If you love me, show me by giving me success, peace, health and happiness.

Show me and that will be enough. Would it? Or will there always be something else? Something more? Something greater? New needs, new wants, new demands.

If we want to see God it must be as He wants to be seen, in the strength and glory of the cross. This is the work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is providing forgiveness for the sin of the world with His death. The Creator comes to serve His creatures. By His service we we can serve Him. Serving, loving, and forgiving others as God has done for us.

It is only through Christ crucified that we see God and know Him. This, as Peter said, is the cornerstone of our faith. The stone upon which our faith is built. This is the stone that is rejected by so many, and upon which so many stumble.

To believe that could wind up getting you in some trouble. Many Christians today are being persecuted and killed for this very profession of faith. There are many people, living in this town, who are here with the physical and emotional scars to prove it. They are here because they proclaim with courage, and in the face of danger and death,

Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through His death and resurrection.

7 John 19:30

8 John 14:3

We should be honored to have such people of courageous unwavering faith among us. You would be privileged to sit next to such people. People who resolved in their heart to stand and say “death before denying Jesus.” They say so with their actions and their conduct.

It is only when our sins are forgiven that the door to Heaven open. Do not overlook what Jesus said at the end of our reading today:

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

If we understand Jesus’ work as the serving and laying down of His life, then we should also see that is what we are called to do, and can do, because He has gone to the Father and sent His Holy Spirit to us, to live in us, and work in us, and conform us to His own image.⁹ What honor Jesus has given to us.

So let us ask: for the faith to believe, for the courage to act, for the love to serve, for the mercy to forgive, and for the strength to lay down our lives for others’ salvation. Let us come and receive the faith, love, and forgiveness our Lord has come to provide. May we soon return to eating His body and drinking His blood, that we would grow up in our salvation. That we may love what He has commanded and desire what He has promised. That our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found. That our hearts not be troubled by the changes and chances, the crosses and the challenges of this world and life, but that we believe in God, and believe also in Jesus Christ, our Savior. How can we not proclaim:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.



**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

9 Romans 8:29