

“Never Alone” - Worship at Home Sheet:

10th May 2020 (Easter 5) “The Way, and The Truth, and The Life”

by Revd Dave Tomlin

Opening Statement: Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn: StF 293 “All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord”

Reading: John 14.1-14

Jesus the Way to the Father

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In 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? And 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. And you know the way to the place 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 know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’

Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 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; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, ‘I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.’ *(New Revised Standard Version)*

Reflection:

I hope that you are all managing to keep well and coping with the restrictions that are in place.

This pandemic is causing so much heart-ache and grief for so many. But hope is still present with us, for Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, and is with us come what may!

Today’s Gospel is John 14.1-14. And I should like to reflect briefly on a few of the passages to be found in it.

I start where Jesus said: ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.’

I wish to offer just two lines of thought from these opening words:

First, do they offer us the possibility that mystery is somehow as valid as actual and absolute proof?

Is what we don’t fully understand guaranteed to be wrong for ever? Might the future reveal something different from what we now know to be a truth?

You know, I’ve never believed in a flat earth because I was born into a world that taught me it was round. I only appreciated that fact when I was privileged to fly all the way around it without falling off the edge!

First, I trusted in it, then decades later I actually experienced it for myself! So often we spend time worrying about things. Worrying gets us absolutely nowhere! But going forward in hope may well lead to our enlightenment! I think early sailors would all want to agree with that approach.

Secondly, it challenges us to TRUST; both in our own judgements and that of others who have experienced what we may be seeking after!

The next passage is where Jesus said:

‘and you know the way to the place 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.’

So what was wrong with Thomas’ question?

Had anybody a clue about where Jesus was going? Did they understand what ‘going to the Father’ meant? As far as I know, there are no records of people who have been raised to life which express what it’s like post mortem!

Today we know enough to begin to understand what Jesus was trying to say because loads of scholars have given us their ideas on the subject. Back then folk were disadvantaged. Aren’t we more fortunate!

But the answer today is simply the same: Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life!

For me it seems clear that what Jesus meant was: Trust me, Take to heart my Teachings and most importantly – **Live out your lives as I have lived out mine!**

You don’t need a Sat’ Nav’ like in your car, simply live like Jesus did!

He then went on to say: ‘No one comes to the Father except through me.’

Now this is where I tread carefully! It’s always struck me that this statement can exclude the God ‘fearing’ saints, both men and women, in the Old Testament! However, if Jesus was in the Father at creation, then Christ was in God and already sharing in God’s attempts to affect folk way back then! But people back then just didn’t have a clue that Jesus existed did they!

This seems just one of the problems created by those early Christians who tried organising the framework of theology and Creeds without thinking that it might evolve over time!

I also freely admit to querying whether some other faiths can be dismissed so readily, let alone absolutely. I’m not happy to do this because, the Sikhs for example, have impressed me with how their Gurdwaras are so manifestly a Christ-like feeding of the poor.

Didn’t Jesus say that folk who were for us were OK? But Jesus, being incarnate as a human may not have been aware that Sikhs in the future, or any other faiths, would also include ‘good works’!

Being a broad church, Methodism includes people having differences of back-ground and approach. Thus every church is free to choose their own priorities when serving others’ needs!

I therefore personally find it hard to be dogmatic on this issue. ‘Cos God can, and does, affect us all.

Other faiths and cultures may simply give rise to different expressions of their faith in action. I think it quite possible for God to be working through some people of other faiths and those of none!

So, how do you feel in relation to this issue – does it help or hinder you?

Jesus goes on to say:

‘If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’

This simple statement is amazing in its directness, and so clearly indicates that the Father and Jesus are one! So if we recognise the Godliness of Christ we are actually seeing the reality of our God at work among us. And what is most awesome of all, doing it through the incarnate human person of Jesus – who became as one of us!

Philip was put in his place quite nicely – almost like a patient parent trying to teach a child, but also a parent feeling somewhat exasperated: “Can’t you believe what you see with your own eyes!”

I wonder how Philip felt? How would you have felt if it were you?

Then Jesus went on to say: 'I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these,... I will do whatever you ask in my name - if in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son!

Wow! There's a lot in this passage! The punch-line is so extremely powerful. It is so amazing that most of the time we can't believe it!

It definitely feels beyond our capabilities; not meant for us – for we're mere mortals, we're not good enough! We are not God, and yet Jesus is actually empowering us. It's not just down to the miracle workers and others who are far more 'Holy' than us. It's addressed to each and every one of us that believe in Jesus! We will be able to act as Christ in and to the world around us!

Shouldn't that encourage us to change our mind-set completely! We're not all losers! We are all winners because God has said: 'You are mine, and I love you more than you can ever imagine – regardless of who or what you are like – and Jesus simply adds his 'Amen' to that as he awaits the dawning of Pentecost and the empowerment from on high for everybody who believes and receives it!

Pentecost is on the horizon. Regardless of a pandemic our future lies in God's hands and the Truth and the Way of Jesus.

Our failure to trust his promise leads to us limiting the work of Christ working in and through us! So I challenge both you and myself by saying:

**Hail the day that sees Him rise in and through our lives. Alleluia!' – for Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!
May God bless us all as we seek after walking hand in hand with His living Christ. Amen.**

Hymn: StF 300 "Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia!"

Our Personal Prayers:

For all those suffering as a result of Covid-19;
For those who are involved in risk taking for others' sakes;
For the leaders of the nations – that they act for the common good of all;
For human kindness and a sense of community that continues to express love and compassion and create a groundswell of real hope for the future of our world.

Blessing:

May the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon us, and remain with us throughout the uncertainty of the days ahead of us.

Though chaos and despair surround us may we receive God's wisdom and grace.

May we discover joy and be filled with hope for all our tomorrows.

If sorrow comes may we reach out to God for his love that can raise us up once more.

May we find courage to trust in him who entrusts us with a power that is not our own – but is contained in Emmanuel's promise to us.

Lord, fill us with your peace, and send us into your world to bring your Kingdom close to those who need it in their lives also. Amen.