

Sermon
St. Mary Nanoose Bay
May 14, 2017 – Mother’s Day
John 14:1-14

“I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn14:6) It’s interesting how often I’ve heard this passage interpreted to justify Christianity. People have said, and continue to say, that only through Jesus is one able to connect to God and have the life God gives in abundance. It’s sad to me when others use Scripture to exclude others when Jesus so clearly came to include, invite and welcome everyone.

When we read this passage from the perspective that our God is a loving, forgiving and giving God, we can hear Jesus’ words differently. Instead of an exclusive directive, can we hear them as an invitation to be in relationship with a God who cares for us personally?

The disciples have been complaining and expressing confusion. Where is this heaven Jesus is talking about? Where is the kingdom of God?

Philip demands to see this “Father” Jesus keeps talking about, and Thomas is confused, “How can we know the way?”

So Jesus reminds them; it’s in relationship that we find and know God. And Jesus has been in relationship with his disciples ever since they chose to follow him. “I am the way, and the truth and the

life.” Could Jesus be saying, “You’ve come close to God by becoming close to me?”

At the Agape dinner in the hall here on Maundy Thursday, Bishop Logan had us perform a little drama called “Table Talk.” In this dramatic narrative, the disciples ask Jesus similar things as in the reading today. In essence, “When are we going to see the kingdom of God?!” And by prompting them with questions, Jesus helps the disciples remember times in the past weeks and months when they’ve seen the miracles and wonders, the healings; when they’ve heard the compassionate words, the puzzling parables. They’ve walked and talked with Jesus; eaten and prayed with him. All ordinary things; yet not so ordinary when they stop and reflect.

We, like the disciples, sometimes think that the kingdom of God is somehow other- worldly. We forget that we’ve been told that the kingdom is amongst us, that it is in our relationships – with Jesus, with God, and with each other.

We miss the miracles, the wonders, the awe because we are expecting something other than what we are being offered. We believe too much in our own ideas of what God is, should be and should be doing. We create so much unnecessary fear and worry because we are unable to see God standing in our midst.

Jesus says in the reading this morning, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” He’s not just suggesting that the disciples give up their worries and fears; he’s directing his followers to open their eyes. What they want is right

before them. So he says, “Stop your fussing. Open your eyes – I’m right here. And I’ve been here with you for a while now. You’ve seen how my power comes from my Father. You’ve seen how I’ve used this power for good, for you. It’s time to decide to trust. Because if not now, when?”

And we today, we’re on the other side of the resurrection. We know so much more of the story. We know that Jesus went so that the Holy Spirit could come and be with us. We have the bread and wine to remind and nourish us every time we celebrate the Eucharist.

And yet, we still doubt. And get confused, despairing and discouraged. It seems to be part of what it is to be a human being. But we needn’t dwell in these places of complaint and confusion. We hear Jesus’ irritation with this kind of resignation or compulsive ‘rationality.’ He calls us up short and reminds us. I’m here. And I am one with the Father. The Father and I dwell in each other. So just trust. Enter into this relationship that holds everything. Just trust.”

And as Jesus was able to do great works out of this indwelling relationship, so too can we.

So, if this all sounds very mysterious and other-worldly, it isn’t. Not if we take Jesus seriously. While, yes, we can’t know the mind of God, we *can be* in relationship with God. Fully. Deeply. Mutually. And out of this mutually embedded relationship, we can do great things in the name of love.

How?

By spending time in and on our relationships. With God. With Jesus.

When we were raising our sons; now 28 and almost 32, a hot parenting tip was circulating –spend quality time with your children every day. The idea is a good one – make sure you give your undivided attention to each child every day so that you can know what’s going on his life and communicate your interest and concern.

The part I didn’t like was the quality vs. quantity part. I likened it to my marriage. If my husband decided how many minutes a day, and when, he would focus his attention on me, I would not like that very much. It would feel like he was rationing his attention and lavishing it when he so chose.

Get my point?

When we decide how much time we are going to portion out to God, and on what terms, we are trying to control a relationship that, in fact, informs our whole life. We delude ourselves when we think we are in control. We deny the impact of the Holy in our lives. We lose sight of the sacred in everyone and everything. We forget that we are the created and the One who created us, sustains and loves us with each breath we take.

I voted in the advance poll. As I waited in line, a man in line behind me exclaimed, “Wow, this is amazing!” I turned around. He was looking around the room and then turned his gaze to me. “I’m 43 years old, and I’ve never voted!” he said. “Can I ask you what made you decide to vote this time?” I ventured. “The water issue here,” he

said, "I want to have a say about what happens. That's why I'm here to vote."

This man had had his eyes opened to the reality of the world around him. It took something upsetting to motivate him to engage in the democratic process and put in his two cents. He woke up and realized that he had the power to make a difference. He lives in a community where people need to learn to communicate and work together.

We Christians are the same. Often it's not until something upsets us and turns our world upside down that we realize our relationship with God isn't very deep or reciprocal. Our fears and worries about life and death, and our loved ones come to the surface and we realize we've spent very little time engaged with our Creator – the One who brings the peace that passes all understanding. We've been busy with lots of worthwhile projects, but have we're not very experienced in dwelling in the Love of God, and letting the Love of God dwell in us.

Sitting with the Word in scripture, taking time to pray, walking or sitting in nature.... these are all ways of creating space for God to dwell within us.

I know that the days I by-pass prayer in order to get to my list of things to do and people to see, I lose connection with the Divine and am more apt to say and do things that do not reflect with peace and joy that are available to me if I only take the time to rest in God's love.

We Christians are so blessed. We have ritual and sacraments to keep us in the knowledge and love of God. We worship in community and have each others' support and care. We have holy scripture to keep us deepening into the mystery of our faith. We gather in a beautiful building; and lovely surroundings.

And everyday we experience miracles and wonders. The birth of a child, the words of a friend, the beauty of a sunrise, and the greening of the earth. We have music and art; poetry and delicious food.

Every day we are given so much. And every day we are invited to give equally as much. In prayer time we are reminded of this. In prayer time we come to know that the indwelling spirit satisfies more than any accomplishment, project or purchase.

Jesus tells us "I will do whatever you ask in my name," and His name is Love. So whatever we do out of an indwelling spirit of love, we do in his name - to the glory of God.

It's all here. It's no trouble. It's the kingdom of God; here is our midst. Let us spend the time with the indwelling spirit. Let the Spirit open our eyes and open our ears so that we can see exactly where we are, and who we're with. And without a doubt - we will want to give thanks to God!

Amen.

