

John 14:1-14

My friend Laura is a college president. She has significant gifts in management, public relations, development, communication, and collaboration. She has a *first rate* intellect. And absolutely no sense of direction, geographically speaking. She would tell you herself that she couldn't find her way out of a wet paper bag. The first time she gave me a ride home from the church we both attended, I guided her to my house and we sat in the driveway and talked for a while. As we said our goodbyes, she said, "OK, now how do I get out of here?"

So that's fine, but, friends, I didn't live in a complicated neighborhood. I lived on the main street leading back to the highway. We had just been down that street. But I gave her directions, and waved her off.

Months later, we had been going back and forth to each other's houses regularly, and she'd still have to ask, "Now how do I get back to the highway?" We live in different places now, and GPS has made it more possible for the directionally challenged to save face. Still, I have a lot more sympathy than I used to for people who don't know where they are or where they're going. I'm usually pretty good with road directions, but put me inside a building with lots of twists and turns, and I might need your help getting back out the door.

So when Jesus says to Thomas, "You know the way to the place where I am going," I immediately feel for Thomas. "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Boy, Thomas, I don't know where we're going either. We have an undeclared war in Iran, and a couple of others we've been apparently cheering on from the sidelines, rocketing prices, political violence, and eroding common ground. How can we know the way?

But let's back up a little, to the pre-Easter setting of this story. It's been a rough evening up to the point of Thomas's question. The authorities are closing in on Jesus. On this last evening with his friends, he washed the disciples' feet, told them his betrayal was imminent, and commanded them to love one another when he was gone.

Simon Peter asks it first: "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answers, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow

afterward.” Peter responds to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” And Jesus answers, “Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times. Bad news followed by worse news. I’m going to die, and you’re not helping matters.

It’s no wonder that Jesus chooses to lead into this farewell discourse, then, with “Do not let your heart be troubled.” He knows hearts will be troubled plenty. The road ahead is uncertain, and where is the GPS for that? Treatment for chronic illness. Recovery from addiction. Halting journeys toward mental health. We don’t know which way the path will lead us, so how can we know the way?

Loss and fear can settle into us so deeply that peace feels impossible. So it’s into that very human experience that Jesus speaks his words: “Y’all! Do not let your one heart be troubled.”¹ He doesn’t shame the disciples for their fear. Instead, he gives them something solid to hold onto: “Believe in God; believe also in me.” In other words, when your emotions are unsteady, anchor yourself in trust.

And that trust rooted in, not vague optimism, but a promise. Jesus is the tangible presence of God, so closely identified that he can say, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” And moreover he is creating space within this intimate relationship that he shares.

As Jesus says, “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.” This is not about heaven as a distant destination. It’s about belonging. It’s about a God who is not cramped, not exclusive, not running out of room—but expansive, welcoming, and intentional. There is space prepared, and it is prepared *for you*.

That matters. Because many people move through life feeling like they are on the outside—like they have to earn their place, prove their worth, or compete for acceptance. Jesus cuts through all of that: there is already a place for you.

And then he deepens the promise: “I go to prepare a space for you... I will come again and will take you to myself.” The goal is not merely a location.

¹ Laura Holmes, *Working Preacher*, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/fifth-sunday-of-easter/commentary-on-john-141-14-7>

The goal is relationship. “Where I am, there you may be also.” The heart of the promise is not a mansion—it is presence.

But then comes Thomas, speaking the question many of us wonder about: “We do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” I can’t even imagine the future. How will I get there?

So this, then, is the context for what Jesus says next. It’s *all* about sensitive pastoral care for his hurting disciples. It is not meant to be an exclusive gesture or a scolding lecture about who gets to go to heaven. Because that is not the question the disciples are asking here. They’re asking how to find Jesus. And he tells them not to worry.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” You can’t get lost, because you already know me. You have already been walking this way.

Faith, then, is not about achieving certainty. It’s about relationship—walking *with*. The way is not a path you figure out; it is following the One you’ve known all along.

“I am the truth.” In a world of competing voices and shifting claims, truth is not just an abstract concept. It is embodied in Jesus—his character, his teaching, his life.

“I am the life.” Not just existence, but fullness, meaning, connection to God. The kind of life that endures even through death.

And then the statement both comforting and challenging, the one that Christians have been misreading now for centuries: “No one comes to the Father except through me.” It is vital to know this is not meant as a barrier to keep people out, but as an invitation to recognize where true life and true relationship with God are found. In this context, speaking to a small group of disciples, Jesus is not making a statement for the ages. He is not claiming that others lack some secret sauce. He is not closing doors—he is opening the door that leads home.

Finally, he says, “If you know me, you will know my Father also.” To see Jesus—his compassion, his mercy, his truth—is to see what God is like. There is no hidden, harsher version of God behind him. There is no

contradiction. In Jesus, God has made himself known in a way we can understand and trust.

So what does this mean for us?

It means that when our hearts are troubled, we are invited to trust—not in our ability to solve everything, but in Christ’s promise to hold us. It means we don’t have to wander aimlessly, because the way is not lost—it is present with us. It means we are not without a place, because one has already been prepared. And it means we are not alone, because the destination is not “some heaven, light years away”—it is a relationship we begin now.

The call of this passage is simple, but not shallow:

Trust him.
Follow him.
Remain with him.

And in doing so, even troubled hearts can find peace. You don’t even need GPS. Amen.