

Easter 5A

So many of us have been comforted by Jesus' words, "Let not your hearts be troubled." But we need to realize that this is not only a recommendation for our emotional lives. It is a command to stand firm, even when our hearts are disturbed. Jesus goes on to say, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" In the beloved King James Bible the word is "mansions" rather than dwelling places. The word also suggests relationship. When we are traveling in strange places or on a journey to new places, it is tremendously comforting to know that there is a mansion, a relationship, a home, prepared for us. Remember the ad for Motel 6? We'll leave the light on for you. I always appreciate so much people who leave the light on for me. But that doesn't mean I always stay at Motel 6!

Jesus adds, if it were not so I would have told you. This statement means even more to me because it addresses our skepticism and our disbelief. It is almost too good to be true that Jesus is preparing a place for each of us. Jesus says, "I am the

truth and the way and the life.” This means that if we have faith in him, we can trust him, because what matters to Jesus is the truth. If it were not so he would have told us. He doesn’t mislead or manipulate. No spin in the Gospel of John. Truth is the pearl of great price. Being truthful with each other is one way we can walk the path Jesus walked. We know we can trust those who speak the truth. And we all know that sometimes it is very hard to do so.

Jesus tells his disciples that no one comes to the Father except through him. This statement has caused a lot of trouble. Does it mean that those who are not Christians cannot come to the Father? Are they going to hell?

Jesus is saying that it is through him, Jesus of Nazareth, that we see and know the Father’s presence in the midst of history. It is the way and the truth for Christians and for everyone who can hear it. After all, everyone must have a home. We can be sensitive and seasoned travelers, appreciative and at ease in many cultures and religions, but for Christians the church is home. As for non-Christians, as well as of those who lived before Christ, we

can say that that is in the hands of God. God can deal with that. More positively, we can say that God is to be found wherever God is recognizable by Christ-like words and deeds, even where Christian claims are not made or known. We don't need to be concerned with condemning or judging others. We can simply say "This is who we are. We are the people who believe in the God who has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ."

God's saving grace is much larger, more spiritually spacious, than anything we can imagine. In my Father's house are many rooms, many mansions, many places to stay.

And then Jesus tells his disciples that anyone who has faith in him will do what he has been doing and even greater things, because he is going to the Father. It isn't a matter of bigger miracles, but of bigger mission. He will send them equipped with the Spirit to people far beyond Galilee and Judea. We too are his disciples and are part of his mission. We are to continue what Jesus has begun. He is sending us equipped with the Spirit out into Eureka, and indeed far beyond Eureka. As Jesus prepares to return to the Father, he tells us that you and I have access to the

same power, when asked in his name. When you and I begin to speak openly and unapologetically about the faith that sustains us, the power of God engages our words to do God's work, and people respond. We do not need to prove the truth of the Gospel or of Jesus' claims. We simply need to confess them, bear witness to them, say "come and see," trusting the power of God to do the rest.

Jesus promises us that he will do for us whatever we ask in his name. In his name. In other words, in the name of love. *Amen.*