

5th Sunday in Easter, Year A – May 22, 2011, Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

Based on John 14:1-12 written by Pastor Paul Horn

Don't be troubled; Jesus tells the truth

- I. **That he has brought you to the Father**
- II. **That he will bring you to the Father**

I have to apologize. I've never done this in my seven years as your pastor. But I'm not prepared for the sermon this morning. You see, the end of the world was supposed to take place yesterday, and so I spent all my time at Hooray for Heroes, trying to tell as many people as possible about Jesus, then I went home and relaxed.

What did Jesus say? He said, **"No one knows about that day or hour. Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. So you must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."** (Matthew 24) It's sad, isn't it, what people will believe as long as it's not in the Bible? Especially when it comes to the topic on how to get right with God in order to get to heaven.

From our First Lesson today (1Kings 18) the Canaanites of the Old Testament carried out immoral sexual rituals so that their god Baal would be happy with them. The Aztecs believed that human sacrifices would show their gods how devoted they were. The teaching of Karma in eastern religions says that my future happiness is contingent on my past and present goodness. Islam teaches that if one faithfully and obediently carries out the five pillars (teachings) of Islam, they will enter paradise, but, even then they aren't sure, because each individual's eternal fate ultimately lies in the hands of Allah. Even so-called Christian religions, such as Catholicism, teach that in addition to faith, one must also rely on their own good works to earn God's favor. Even Oprah has an opinion and we should all listen to Oprah, right? She has preached on her television show again and again that there are many paths to heaven and we're all just trying to find our way. Oprah isn't the only one in America with this idea. A recent poll revealed there is clear evidence that many Americans don't view their religion as the only true path to God. Seventy-five percent of Americans say that there is a religion "other than their own that offers a true path to God," and of that number a substantial majority believe that this other path to God is equally as good as their own.¹

Then what is truth? As the Roman governor Pontius Pilate asked Jesus.... Well, what does Jesus say? He says, "There is only one way to get right with God, only one way to heaven. And that's through faith in me." That's hard to accept, even for Christians, as the poll suggests. Can't people of other religions or denominations be saved? Can't they get to heaven without Jesus Christ? As we look at John 14 this morning we will see that Jesus and Jesus alone tells the truth and he proves that he is the one way to salvation.

I. He has brought you to the Father

I know we are in the middle of the Easter Season and Holy Week is behind us, but this morning John 14 takes us to the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus had just dined with his disciples hours before facing his betrayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and less than a day before his death and burial. He told them that all of those things were going to happen. He also told them that Peter will deny knowing his Messiah, and they all will run away and abandon him. He told them that he was leaving them. They were about to see the one who claimed to be "the resurrection and the life" die. The disciples were deeply troubled. They were visibly shaken. Wouldn't you be?

¹ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/103459/questions-answers-about-americans-religion.aspx#1>

To prepare them for all of this, Jesus said, **“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”** Don’t worry about all of this. Trust me. Put your wavering faith in my firm promises. Jesus said, **“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”** There’s a word the translators of the New International Version would have done better to leave out. In the original Greek, Jesus doesn’t say, “I am going there to prepare a place for you.” He says, **“I am going to prepare a place for you.”** It’s just a one-word difference. But it changes our perspective on what Jesus said he’s going to do. To include *there* makes it sound as though Jesus were going to heaven to get it ready for us. On the night of his betrayal Jesus wasn’t talking to his disciples about going up to heaven to get heaven ready for us. Scripture clearly teaches that heaven has been prepared since the foundation of the world. Jesus was telling them that was about to prepare them for those mansions. He was telling them that he would be providing the way to those mansions. And that way was only through his death and resurrection. That’s why he said, **“I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to Father except through me.”**

How else will sinners get right with God; God who is perfect holy and righteous? Will he demand anything less for our price of admission into his heavenly courts? His demands certainly cannot be met by our best efforts or by our hard work, because they won’t be good enough. His justice will not be satisfied if we think that we’ve done better than others because at the end of the day, we weren’t perfect like he is. And as much as we hate to admit it, we know it’s all true! Our sins (and there are many of them), our consciences and God’s holy law revealed through the Bible, all remind us daily that we have sinned and that one day the scales of justice will be balanced. Nearly every world religion acknowledges that there is a problem in this world; death and the yearning to get right with God. Nearly every world religion offers its own solution.

Jesus says, “There is one way, one truth, one life, and that is me.” He is the only one who came down from heaven, from the Father. He’s been there. He knows. He shares the way there through his Word, **“I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to Father except through me.”** How else can we balance the scales of justice? Our meager pile of good works will not outweigh the load of sin on the other scale. Even if they did, they will not dispose of those sins either. But in Jesus we have a Savior who came from heaven, who humbled himself under God’s laws, obeying them obediently, perfectly, living without sin. No other religion has a Savior who has done that for all people. Jesus did it. And he offers his perfect life freely to all people. In Jesus we have a Savior who took the load of sins off of our scales and placed it on himself. No other religion has a Savior who willingly takes punishment on behalf of the world. Jesus did it. And he offers his death freely to all people. No other religion has had a leader whose tomb is now empty because he rose from the dead. No other religion has a Savior who lives today, but you do. That Savior is Jesus Christ. No other religion has had its leader say, “Now I’ve done this all for you. You don’t have to earn it or prove to me that you deserve it. I give it to you freely. Believe in me. Trust my words, and you will have life.” Jesus did.

Thank God that by his grace you believe. Thank God that by his grace God through the power of his Word connected with water created the gift of faith in your heart at your baptism. Thank God that your faith clings to Jesus’ promises. Thank God that your faith looks to Christ and Christ alone for salvation. Through faith Christ Jesus is yours. Through faith the Father is also yours. You have that relationship with the Father in heaven that so many people in this world are trying to get. You have it freely through the one who is the way, the truth, the life.

This was the comfort that Jesus’ troubled disciples needed to hear on the night he was betrayed. Even though they would not see clearly through their sorrow and grief and confusion, they had Jesus’ promise. “These things had to happen, so that I could bring you to the Father. So don’t be troubled. Don’t go looking for another way. But look to me.”

When you, as a disciple of Jesus, find yourself in a predicament that seems too complex, too overwhelming, too irreversible for Jesus to help you through, or you feel that God can't or won't help you this time, Jesus says, "Don't go looking for some other way. I am the way. Trust me when I tell you, 'This will work out for your good.'" (Romans 8:28) To you, his disciple, who may struggle to believe that everything the Bible says is really true, Jesus says, "Don't make up your own truth. Don't go looking somewhere else. I am the truth. Trust me." To you, his disciple, who may feel like your own horrible sins stand like brick walls between you and God, Jesus says, "Don't doubt. Trust that I have blasted through those brick walls with my death. I am the life. You have life through me." To you, his disciple, who carries out your surrounded by sorrow and doubt and pain and heartache and tears, the words Jesus spoke the night before his death continue to ring true: "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me...I am the way and the truth and the life. You couldn't be in better hands. Trust me that I will also bring you to the Father."

II. That he will bring you to the Father.

Stephen Hawking is a renowned theoretical physicist. A theoretical physicist uses math to rationalize, explain and predict natural phenomena. In a statement last week Stephen Hawking said that he rejects the idea of heaven or an afterlife, calling the belief a "fairy story" for people afraid of dying. "I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark," he added.²

Mr. Hawking is a very smart man and I will not take that away from him. But his math and his human reason tell him there is no heaven. But we have the truth. We know and are confident that there is an afterlife, for we have the Word of him who has prepared it for us. We know and confident how to get there; through faith in him who destroyed the grave and hell by his resurrection from the grave. For not only has he brought us to the Father, but he promised that he will bring you to the Father. **"In my Father's house are many rooms. I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."**

My dear friends, remember these words when you hold the hands of someone who is dying, before your own death, while you are facing death... that before his own death he said, "Do not be troubled; trust in me. I will come back for you and you will live with me and my Father." You who live by faith in Jesus Christ, will live with Jesus Christ. He promised that he will come back, with the sound of the angel's trumpet, and the dead will be raised, and we will be changed. Our bodies will be made incorruptible. And we will rise to live with Christ and all the saints for all eternity in the mansions of heaven. We know this is true. Because we have a promise from the one who came down to earth from there and then went back again on his own accord. He's God. God does not lie. He will bring you to the Father.

Yesterday, May 21, 2011, was supposed to be the final day on this earth. Some religious group from Raleigh, NC predicted the end of the world would come on that date. Jesus promised things like this would happen. Wars around the world continue to rage. Tornados, flooding, the spread of false doctrine.... He promised these things would happen before he comes! Are we troubled? Are we afraid? No. Because he comforts us and says, "Don't be afraid. Trust in me. For I have brought you to the Father, and I will bring you to the Father." I pray that Jesus will keep you in the one true faith, that your faith remain focused on him who is the Way, the truth and life. Amen.

² <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2011/05/cosmologist-stephen-hawking-rejects-heaven-or-afterlife-as-a-fairy-story/1?csp=obnetwork>