

Fifth Sunday of Easter – 2020

Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

Have you ever felt stupid, or is it just me? It's not a super great feeling, is it? And it's not as though your perception is off the mark – sometimes feeling stupid is a pretty accurate insight into the way things really are. I suspect that it is a nearly universal feeling. Do you remember sitting in your desk at school and being absolutely lost and looking around the room being certain that you were the only one. Do you remember being in a conversation with friends who all seemed to know something that you didn't know and you were afraid to ask because then the secret of you being a little "slow" would get out, so you just played along like you were with them? Do you remember asking a question where everyone's head snapped in your direction with a smirk on their face as if to say: "Hello? How could you possibly not know that?"

Have you ever felt stupid, or is it just me? A little lost, a bit slow on the uptake, like someone who laughs at a joke 10 seconds after the punchline. Thomas thought that he was a little bit lost; Philip too, but we'll get to him down the road. Thomas was totally innocent. He didn't mind one bit looking like the student with a cone on his head, sitting in the corner. **The beautiful thing about it is that he wasn't as lost as he thought he was.** The fact is, you know way more than you think you know. I'm supposed to know a lot of theology because that is my vocation – and Christians in general are to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to long for pure spiritual milk. That is to say, knowing God's Word, knowing Christian doctrine is a blessed pursuit. It stimulates our mind for it is divine truth. God's Word calms our spirit for it is full of peace and we live in chaotic times. God's Word instills hope, confidence, and clarifies who God is and what He has done. But at its core, Christianity is not complex; it is not esoteric, not spiritual rocket science. It's wonderfully, powerfully, beautifully straight forward.

This episode happens on Maundy Thursday, the night before the Lord is crucified. To be sure, it is a confusing time for the apostles. Their world seems to be coming unglued. In a remarkable act of humility, Jesus washes the disciples' feet. He intimates that one of them will betray Him. The Lord Christ announces Peter's coming denial. Jesus tells them that He is going someplace that they cannot follow. That's when the protests begin. Their minds aflame with the thought of being abandoned, the disciples quietly protest. In that highly charged atmosphere, Jesus speaks the most delightful words. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. 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, that where I am you may be also. **And you know the way to where I am going**" (John 14:1-4).

They knew. Jesus said that they knew and He was right. They knew the way... and they didn't know that they knew. They knew and they were distracted by their surroundings so that they deceived themselves into temporarily believing that they didn't know what they actually knew. Thomas didn't know that he knew and so he said so. Jesus straightened Thomas out and it wouldn't be the last time. Jesus blew away the distraction that clouded Thomas' mind and straightened him out. "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' (John 14:5-6). They did know the way. They knew Him! They knew the Lord Christ and that is everything. Christianity is not a set of abstract religious principles that stand rigid and aloof in some academic textbook. Christianity is knowing Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Knowing Him is everything. Theology is taken from His person which then sweeps you up, creating faith, and then returns you back to Him changed by His action. You know the way because you know Him. He has seen to it.

You know grace. Grace is the fact that you were dead in your sins and God decided to reach out to you in His Son. Grace is Christ in action. Grace is the gift of Jesus that you didn't deserve. Grace is love in the blood of the Lord Christ who gives His life in your place. You are saved by grace and you know it for you know exactly what Jesus has done for you. You know grace for you know Christ.

Apart from Him there is only death and God doesn't want you to be apart from Him. So, God took upon Himself our flesh to pay the price you could not pay. Sin brings a hefty price. Purity so intense, power so immeasurable, love so endless – that is why Christ mounts the cross. Only He could pay. You know this for you know Him. You have grown confident in life because you have learned of His cross. You know His blood covers your sin. You know that the price is paid for you know that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten from the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is your Lord. You know Him and you certainly know the way.

You know that forgiveness is anchored in His death and no where else. For the world; this sacrifice is for the whole, entire world. No one's sin has been left unatoned for; No one! Forgiveness is abundant because the Blood of Christ speaks on our behalf. You know Him and so you know this. He has made sure that you know Him. His Word is animated by the Holy Spirit who has enlivened your heart, your mind to see the truth, to know the truth. You have been redeemed. His death was for you. And death couldn't hold Him. Resurrected, He has changed death. It has no sting. You are delivered from the grave. Heaven is your destiny. You know all this because you know Him. There is nothing hidden. There is nothing secret just to a select few. There is no clandestine password, no special handshake, no whispered insider trading – Christianity is out in the wide open for everyone to enjoy, for everyone to celebrate, for everyone to receive.

You know the way. And yet, sometimes the distractions of the world cloud your mind and you act as if you don't. You know the way and sometimes you deceive yourself and the clarity of Christ grows fuzzy and you grope around for who you are, you grope around for what you should be about, the cross losing its force in your mind and you protest against what God says. It's sad, this thing that you do, making your problems bigger than God, bigger than what He has done. It's sinful, really; weak and lame and what is worse, it weakens others around you. You know the way. And sometimes you act as if you are simply going to the morgue and not to heaven. It shows, you know. That you fear the morgue; that you fear a place that you will never truly go. It shows. And when it shows our Lord's name is not hallowed. When it shows the church is not emboldened to stand on Christ's promises. When it shows your brothers and sisters in the faith are not strengthened. It's time to examine that. It's time to repent of that.

Thomas knew the way. Jesus knew that Thomas knew even if Thomas didn't know that he knew. And that is the beauty of Christianity. Jesus had claimed Thomas; claimed Thomas as His own. Jesus had revealed Himself to Thomas. Jesus had revealed the Father to them all, including Philip. A living revelation of the Creator of heaven and earth, Jesus was a freshly washed window into the Father's heart, Jesus was a freshly washed window into the Father's will to save. Both Philip and Thomas knew more than they thought they knew. Jesus made that clear. They knew Him.

A living revelation comes to you in this Divine Service. God is with us. In our distress, in our challenges, in our ongoing attempts to navigate the treacherous waters of this virus and our over-zealous government, God is with us. What does He reveal? "In this world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). What does He reveal? "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). What does He reveal? "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). That is His Word. That is a revelation... for you... that you may know that you know.

You know Christianity for you know Christ. He is our pure spiritual milk. He is the Way. He is the Truth. He is the Life. To Him be glory forever and ever.