

Sermon for Easter 6C
Sunday, May 22, 2022
“Do not be troubled; do not be afraid”

Text: John 14:23-29

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid,” Jesus said, because even in the midst of uncertainty, God is always near.

There is a lot going on in today’s gospel reading, but it is difficult to grasp the full impact without putting it in the context of the entire 14th chapter of John. John, Chapter 14 is known as John’s Farewell Discourse. Jesus starts out by preparing his disciples for his upcoming departure from this world, yet in doing so, he leaves them puzzled and asking lots of questions, so Jesus imparts the comfortable words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many dwelling places...I go there to prepare a place for you...and you know the way.” That leads to the first question, which Thomas asked, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus then reveals to him, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know the Father also.” That leads Philip to say to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” To which Jesus scolds him by asking essentially, “How can you ask me that? Haven’t you been listening to anything I’ve been telling you?” “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned.” That’s when Judas (not Iscariot) asks the question that we hear at the beginning of today’s gospel: “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus speaks with certainty and reassurance about where he is going and that the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, will be sent to them to comfort and teach. But, what the disciples hear fills them with doubt, uncertainty, and more questions. They don’t understand where Jesus says he is going, they aren’t certain of the way forward when he leaves, and they don’t feel prepared to take hold of the responsibility they’ve been given when he does leave. But Jesus keeps reassuring them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.”

The characters in this story lived in uncertain times. They couldn’t really be sure just what the Romans were going to do next. Centuries of history in which the people of Israel had been enslaved in Egypt, conquered by the Assyrians, exiled in Babylon, and now controlled by the Romans, left them uncertain about what might happen next. The people who first heard John’s Gospel, known as the Johannine Community, faced

an uncertain future as the Romans had destroyed their beloved temple some twenty years earlier and now their Jewish brethren were making them feel increasingly unwelcome in the synagogues, because they were preaching a radically new message. These words of scripture were meant to reassure a community of believers that everything was going to be ok.

The words of Jesus are meant to comfort anyone of any age living in uncertain times. We really don't know what tomorrow will bring. Our world is in constant flux. Our world is gripped with the fear of terrorism here at home and abroad. We seem to be on the brink of another war that may involve many nations of the world. We worry about the economy as the price of everything is sky high. We don't feel safe on our streets. We're disappointed with the actions of our civic leaders. We have concerns about our health, our wealth, our relationships, our families, our jobs, our expenses, our retirement, our future. We fear the next surge of a new coronavirus strain and how that will affect daily life. We have no idea as to when the next natural disaster will hit, and we hope that we will be prepared to deal with it. There is so much uncertainty in our lives today, but Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid."

Today's Gospel, looks forward to the Day of Pentecost and comforts us right now. It reminds us that God is always near. God is always near to lead, guide, and comfort us through all that life throws in front of us, good and bad. That's why this gospel is so pertinent for Rogation Sunday. We live in the constant reality that life is ever-changing. The beauty of the warm weather, green flowering trees, new flowers, the blue rivers and oceans, or the majesty of human technology and engineering can be in an instant wiped away by the forces of nature. During these days leading up to the Solemnity of the Ascension, which will be this Thursday, we pray (we *rogate*) for God's protection in the midst of an ever-changing world and universe. Take your bulletins home and include the prayer for rogation days in your daily prayers this week. Read and pray the collects for Rogation Days found on pages 207-8 of the Prayer Book, in which we pray for fruitful seasons, for the success of commerce and industry, and for our good stewardship of God's creation. Today after [the 11:00] Mass, we will process along Jamaica Avenue praying for these things, and we will pass out flyers to the businesses we pass letting them know that we are praying for them. We live in uncertain times, just like the followers of Jesus and the followers of St. John the Evangelist, but Jesus has reminded all of us, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." Just hang in there, keep an open mind, and keep trying to be the best people we can be.

There's nothing in scripture that tells us that we won't have ups and downs in life. Even Job, a righteous and godly man, experienced a desert, a low point in his life, a dark night of the soul, but he got through it, and so can we. No matter how bad things may seem in your life, no matter how uncertain you may be about the future, "Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not be afraid." God is still in the midst of it all, and

he will not leave us comfortless, for we have an Advocate, the Holy Spirit that keeps us grounded and keeps us comforted. All we have to do is to keep believing, just as Jesus said, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

The world, life, the human experience each offers us uncertainty, disruption, chaos, disorder, but Jesus offers us a kind of peace which the world cannot give. Whatever is going on in your life right now, whatever joys you’re celebrating or sorrows you’re trying to muddle through, just remember, “Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not be afraid,” for God remains with us in the midst of it all. Amen.

Resources

Feasting on the Word for Easter 6 (Year C, Volume 2).

Elizabeth Johnson “Commentary on John 14:23-29” in *The Working Preacher*,
https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2838

David Lose, “Peace the world cannot give” in ...*In the meantime*,
<http://www.davidlose.net/2016/04/easter-6-c-peace-the-world-cannot-give/>