

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

May 7, 2023



PLACE

preparing room for others

by Drew Downs

This week's gospel reading has Jesus comforting his followers after telling them that he is going away. He tells them that he's preparing a place for them.

Everyone loves the idea of being welcomed. We love the idea of place, being known, appreciated, and loved.

But it isn't always easy to be the one preparing place. When people come to visit,

we feverishly clean the stuff we think we ought to be cleaning more regularly. We prepare to make room. And yet, sometimes, when we do the visiting, we try to insist on not bothering with all that. We're there to see *them*, not how clean the bathtub is.

Jesus is talking about getting on. He insists that they have what they need. This isn't just about being a good host. He's encouraging them to keep loving generously.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Acts 2 Sunday

This past Sunday, we celebrated with friends from around the Diocese of Indianapolis at our annual Diocesan Confirmation service. This year, we gathered at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Indianapolis. Our own contingent was there to celebrate as we welcomed Zach Anderson, Taylor Johnson, and Tyler Johnson into The Episcopal Church through confirmation.

And on a day of the absolute craziest weather (we had sun, rain, hail in the span of minutes—multiple times), we also celebrated faith in the midst of everything.

The Bishop's message for us began with her own simple pleasure in the Sunday on which we were gathering. That much of the church calls it Shepherding Sunday and focuses on the gospel. But she thinks of it as Acts 2 Sunday. The day we read about the earliest followers *living out the gospel*.

She shared the beauty of that moment. Of the church acting like the church. Of people getting together and choosing *not* to be alone. To not go it alone. To think that the only way to do a thing is to do it oneself.

And then she reminded us all that, in the church, someone *always* has our back. And that when we are the church, we get each other's back. So beautiful and true. It struck me just how much that *is* our message *and* our need. How much *more* that needs to be our message to one another. That we already are the church and our church needs us all to be the church.

With love,
Drew

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FOR SUNDAY

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 7, 2023

Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

John 14:1-14

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. 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, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." 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. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, 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

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the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

Reflection

Many of us know this passage as "the funeral gospel" in much the same way 1 Corinthians 13 is "the wedding reading". We have a kind of context for when we receive this that is not dependent on the context of the gospel, but the context in our lives.

But we receive it this week in the midst of *Easter*. A time when we experience the exquisite confusion of Jesus's death *and* resurrection. When the disciples begin to reckon with Jesus going away forever, but with the understanding that he isn't *truly* gone for good.

We don't have that exquisite confusion ourselves. But we do have a kind of disquiet with how to approach this all theologically. And with our own kind of literal interpretation governing our beliefs.

So we hear Thomas not knowing the way and nod along. Because we know there's obviously no roadmap. So literal, but also, so *real*, right? We don't know how to cope with life, let alone death. How to keep going and how to navigate this crazy world!

And we may think Philip's response is naive theologically, but darn it if we don't also do the same. Telling God to *prove it* over and over. Telling our leaders to make it simple. Our teachers to just get to what we need to know. *Rabbi, what's on the test?*

But their answers are standing right before them. The Way has been revealed in the teachings and person of Jesus. He's right in front of us. We just have to look.

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