

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



May 14, 2023

SEEING

knowing is a matter of focus

by Drew Downs

People always want to know what the right thing to do is. Always.

The thing about "right" is that it becomes a matter of perspective. Which, of course, is an idea we're taught from an early age. To see the world from another person's perspective corrects the bias of seeing things *only* from our own perspective. Because we all need to remember that other people need love and support just as we do.

Another part of shifting perspective involves foreground and background. When taking a picture, our cameras must choose between focusing on what's close up or what's further away.

One reason we struggle with doing the right thing is that we are looking at only the decision in front of us. But if we focus on what else is around us, we can tell if we're even looking in the right direction.

EASTER

2023

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!

Coronations and Kings

This past weekend, we had the coronation of King Charles III of England. A day in which many people, all over the world, watched the public spectacle that is more than a mere transfer of power. It is about monarchy, authority, and religion, all rolled into one. And it is a day in which the church *consecrates* a king, in all of its tradition, opulence, and regalia.

While I have made no attempt to hide my own convictions about the intersection of power, faith, and the state, I do hold a high regard for sovereignty, and the right of a people to exercise *their* forms the way they do. Charles doesn't need my permission to be king, in other words.

As many of you know, I went to a Canadian seminary. And part of our work was to lead in all parts of our chapel life together. One of those parts is leading the prayers of the people. And, seeing as it was Canada, I'd usually include a prayer for the (then) Queen. I mean, when in Rome, right? One time, afterward, a professor reminded me "You're American. She isn't your Queen. When you lead the prayers, lead them as *you*." We had fought a war about that, after all. It isn't *just* about my adapting to them, but their adapting to *me* and what I represent.

This, of course, is the beautiful mess of Anglicanism. He isn't our king. But he is our siblings' king. And we certainly can like the spectacle as a spectacle. But we can also feel strangely connected to it regardless. Not because it matters in any substantive way, but because it matters to our friends, our people. Which means that it matters to us.

With love,
Drew

EASTER

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 14, 2023

Collect

○ God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

John 14:15-21

Jesus said, "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; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

EASTER

Reflection

Jesus offers us assurance in The Advocate—the Holy Spirit.

Specifically, he is saying to his disciples that he will soon be going away. They need to get ready to follow The Way he has laid out for them. They know The Way because he has told them. And because they have been walking it already.

And as they may be afraid of the future or confused by what to do, they don't need to. Because they know. And they can be assured of his presence with them.

This was the substance of what he said right *before* this. Here, he is saying, I'm leaving you with *more* assurance. An advocate. Who will abide *with* you. And *in* you. So you have no reason to be afraid. Keep it up, people!

In the two thousand years since this, we've come up with theological convictions around the nature of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We call them the Trinity. And we've also developed some interesting arguments about how they relate to one another and how it all works. But none of that was around in about 30 CE. They had Jesus making a promise.

And that promise was that a Spirit would be with them and inside them. An idea that is quite striking. Especially given our tradition focuses our attention outward. Toward a God who lives "Up There". To suggest that part of God *abides* within us is way more than a step beyond being made in the image of God. It's bunches of steps beyond.

So, what would it take for us to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit *lives* within us? And what would this do to our sense of loneliness? Our sense of community? And for our sense of church? That perhaps we are of use after all? That we can't be alone? And ultimately, that we genuinely embody the very grace of God?

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