

## John 14:1-14, 2017

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>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? <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going." <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." <sup>9</sup>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'?" <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>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 the Father. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

John 14:1-14, 2017

This passage is not necessarily the one I would select for Mother's Day.

Its most frequent use is for funerals.

But like all passages of scripture, there is more than one circumstance, or context in which it is relevant.

Yes, this passage is one that gives those who have lost a loved one the assurance that in death there is not only loss, but promise, hope, life.

There are plenty of mother's who have lost children and plenty of children who have lost mothers.

There are mothers and children separated by miles and many other things on the Mother's Day.

There is no such thing as a mother who has never had a troubled heart over what their child might be up to,

or a decision made at some point in their child's life or about their future,

and they all can take the comfort offered in this message of love to Jesus'[- disciples

and to us on this Mother's Day;

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe...

Believe in the presence, the power, mercy and love of God for you and your children.

Now you recognize, as anyone would, that this passage goes on and speaks to the promise of salvation, the promise of eternal life with Jesus

in a place he goes to prepare for you, and that he will come and take you to on some day.

All these things are ours because God made provisions for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus

“...and where he is you will be also.”

Maybe this is an appropriate passage for us to hear this weekend in a way not related to Mother’s Day.

Maybe this is the appropriate passage for us to hear today with all the changes thrust upon us in the last weeks.

What will life and ministry be like here after Susan leaves?

What will the life and the future of the church be like if we cannot sustain our Weekday Childhood Ministry given the new requirements placed upon us?

In our council meeting this last Tuesday we were discussing the recommendation from the Weekday Childhood Ministry Advisory Board,

which I must say the members of the advisory board put a great deal of work into, and did a great job on.

We had to decide whether to accept it the way it was presented or to amend it.

We were searching for the best way to address all the issues that concern not only the advisory board,

but also our concerns for the congregation and our future ministry.

This has been a very emotional experience;

more for some who are and have been invested in this ministry to greater degrees and for longer periods of time than others.

But all these levels of emotion about what is happening have to be considered in all our decisions

and the way in which we go about making these decisions.

So, in our meeting we were having this conversation and it was emotional, not angry for hostile in any way, but sad,

people were hurting that we have come to this point.

I leaned over to Penny Kuhaneck who was sitting beside me, and said,

this is like planning a funeral.

The reality of the feelings we all had were like the feelings we have when we have lost someone we love

and we have to make all the arrangements for the funeral, for care for the family,

deal with financial matters and then eventually there will be the need to tend to the disposition of personal effects.

Along the way there must be time to grieve, to remember the life and love shared over the years spent together.

You all, either by email or if you chose to pick up the information in the narthex,

have or soon will read about the recommendations of your church leaders to discontinue the Weekday Childhood Ministry,

and we will have to deal with the recommendations in our Congregation Meeting next week.

This will be like dealing with the death in the family.

You have cared for, you have invested yourselves in, and in so many ways contributed to this ministry

that you cannot help but be affected by this.

When you consider the hundreds of children and their families over the last 10 years whose lives were touched by this ministry, the many children who would have no idea who Jesus is except for this ministry,

you cant help but grieve the possibility that it may be discontinued.

At Ruth circle on Thursday of this week the irony was shared that it is within a couple of weeks after Phyllis King's death that this ministry she was so instrumental in creating and leading,

and came back 3 times over the years to pull out of the fire, may suffer the same end.

Jesus, in our gospel lesson, gives us a word of hope for our situation with the words he spoke to his disciples as they spent their last night together eating,

learning from him, being prepared for a new direction in life and ministry because within 24 hours he was going to be dead.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.”

I can't tell you how important this message is to our lives now.

This goes to the core of who we are as people of God, how we live our lives and how we as a community of faith carry out the work God has called us to;

to evangelized the part of the world we touch, to tell those who we can reach about God's love.

Believing, that is how we are able to live, to get through the difficult times,

to grieve and at the same time have hope for a future that is full and meaningful.

Believing, this is how we can see God's new vision of our future and the way we are to go.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe...I am the way, the truth and the life.”

Jesus makes this claim to be “the way” and I believe we can take hope in that claim especially now.

In Jewish understanding this claim was one of God's greatest claims over their lives and the world.

Throughout the writings of the Old Testament God talks about the “way, his way.”

The scriptures talk about the ways in which we are to walk and the ways of God.

From Deuteronomy, “You shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which he Lord your God has commanded you.”

From Isaiah, “ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.”

Sometimes God was addressing his moral and ethical expectations for the people.

Other times as in the Isaiah passage God was sending a message of hope to the people of Israel as he prepares them for their return trip to Israel and Jerusalem

from the captivity they have lived in for so long,  
a long period of time in which they lived in oppression  
and doubt, far away from their homeland.

Jesus says to his disciples, and us, “I am the way.”

Are we able to allow God, Jesus to be our way?

What would that mean for us?

Suppose you were in a strange town in some far away place--I was thinking about London or Paris—and you needed directions.

So you stop and ask someone and they say,

Go down here and take the first right and then go about four blocks and turn left. Go up to the roundabout and take the second street off of that. Go down to your third left and your street will be the second right.

Chances are you won't get half way there before you have no idea where you are.

But, what if that person said, “Come on, I will take you.” They make sure you get to your destination safely.

In that moment the one helping you is the way.

That is what Jesus does for us.

He doesn't only give directions or advise, but takes us by the hand and leads us.

Along the way he guides and strengthens us, provides for our every need.

We can give thanks that God has made these promises a reality by bringing our new musicians Linee, Orlando and Jeff to us as worship music leaders

Just days before Sara Hood's leaving.

As we approach our meeting next week we can allow Jesus to be our way, our strength in grieving, our faith in believing our hope for a future.

As we remember our mothers today, and as you ladies with children are remembered and honored today,

Let us remember that our Lord Jesus has been there to be your way, your strength and your hope,

And for your children too.