

Easter 5                      5/10/20  
 St. John 14:1-14            A

“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.”

Today is Mother’s Day, which means I will do what most of you will do today – I will call my Mom. And it will happen, as it has happened in every phone call over the course of the last almost 40 years, my Dear Mother will end the conversation with the question, “When are you coming home?”

To which I always want to say, “But, Mom, I am home.” This is where my dog is, this is where my golf clubs are, this is where I get my mail. But, I guess to my Mom, this is not my home.

What about you? Where is “home”? If you’ve lived in Mercer County all your life, in Beulah all your life, on the same farmstead all your life, is that home? Our Lord Jesus answers that question for us this morning. Listen to His words,

“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 (Jn 14:2-3).”

No matter how long we live on this earth, no matter where we live on this earth, this is not our home. For the Christian believer, heaven is our home.

I. Look at how Jesus teaches us that in our Gospel reading this Sunday. Jesus begins our Gospel with the words, “Do not let your hearts be troubled (v. 1).” Why does He say that? Because in this Church Militant, there is no rest for the saints of God.

Yes, it is Mother's Day today. But, for many, that means we will only get to talk to Mom on the telephone or maybe some type of chat on the internet so we can at least see them, because the coronavirus has distanced us from them. Especially as we are seeing a spike in cases in some of our area nursing homes, we are not able to hug our Moms and visit them in person.

Mercer County now has positive cases of Covid-19. No, that is not a reason to boast, that is to illustrate how much this pandemic has impacted our lives. Our high school and college graduates are being robbed of the joy of their graduation ceremonies, because they are being postponed and adjusted, which means family and friends may not be able to celebrate with them.

"Where's the beef," has been the cry this past week, as the coronavirus has impacted meat processing plants so that even Wendy's restaurants have a shortage of hamburger. All the while, I would like to add, that our ranchers and ag producers are getting squeezed with shrinking markets and forced to make a go of it with ever dwindling profits.

And, we don't have only the tribulation of Covid-19. Now, murder hornets are coming. And this past week, North Dakota, Coal Country, received the news that Coal Creek Station is closing. That not only means the loss of 260 jobs in the energy arena, but the economic impact those jobs support as well.

Trouble. Tribulation. Frustration. Why? Because the world is cursed by sin. The creation was subjected to frustration, Paul writes (Ro 8:20). God created the perfect home for us. Paradise for all eternity. But, it was not enough for us simply to enjoy all that God had given. We wanted to be in the place of God. So, we rebelled and brought sin, death, and the

condemnation of hell upon ourselves. God cast us out of Paradise and now we are left to wander through the troubles, tribulations, and frustrations of this valley of the shadow of death.

II. But, as we feebly struggle, God gives us hope and reason to rejoice - we are strangers here, but Jesus has prepared a place in heaven for us through His suffering, death, and resurrection.

Jesus came to this earth born of a Virgin. He took upon Himself all the guilt and penalty of our sin and died the death those sins demanded. "...in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself...For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin," is how the Bible says it (2 Cor 5:19, 21)." The Good News of the Christian faith is the sin which separated us from God is gone in the blood of Christ, we are forgiven and reconciled to our Father in heaven. And, when Jesus rose victorious on Easter morning, He removed the sting of death and the grave for us.

In these last Sundays of the Easter season, as Pentecost approaches, we begin to look forward to our Lord's ascension. Forty days after He rose, He ascended into the glory of His Father. Why? Jesus tells us in our Gospel,

"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 (vv. 2-3)."

By our baptism into Christ, we become one with in His death and life. As Christ rose from the grave, we rise from the grave in Him. And in His ascension, we see our own ascension into heaven.

III. And so, as we live our days in this valley of the shadow of death, Dear Children of the Heavenly Father, Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled (v. 1)."

In the Old Testament, God's people were known as "Israelites". God was teaching them a great truth with that name. "Israelite" means "wanderer." By calling us wanderers, God is teaching us that we are pilgrims, strangers, on this earth. This earth is not our home. God never wanted our lives to be days and nights of trouble, tribulation, and frustration. By calling us "Israelites", God is reminding us that we these troubles, tribulations, frustrations are temporary, only for today.

"Believe in God; believe also in Me," Jesus says (v. 1). Even though He has ascended to prepare a place in heaven for us, He has not abandoned us nor forsaken us.

Think of how He attended the Israelites of old. When His children were enslaved in Egypt, God heard their cries and delivered them through the Red Sea waters. When His children wandered in the wilderness, God feed them and lead them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Every day, they pressed on because before them God had set the Promised Land to be their home. After 40 years, God allowed them to enter that Land flowing with milk and honey. The third chapter of Joshua records for us that when the children of God arrived at the Jordan River, God made the river waters stopped flowing, allowing the children to safely, at long last, enter the Promised Land.

And He sustains you through your journey of trouble, tribulation, and frustration, Dear Child of God. As He led His children to freedom through the Red Sea waters, God has led you to freedom through the waters of baptism. This day, you wander through the wilderness of sin. But, God has set the Promised Land of heaven, your eternal home, before you. Christ has opened it to you. As you walk by faith, awaiting your exodus from this vale of tears, Christ, your Good Shepherd, is ever with you. He

comes to you through His Word of Absolution to bring peace to your fear-filled heart. He comes to you in His Body and Blood to forgive you of your failure to trust in His will. As He forgives, He feeds your faith so that you may ever fear, love, and trust in your Heavenly Father above all things.

In Christ, you are prepared for whatever cross God, in His mercy, permits to enter your life. God is our Refuge and Strength, an ever-present help in time of need. God gives to us the hope of heaven and no one or nothing can take that from us. God will direct you there. He will hold back all dangers and foes, as He did with the waters of the Jordan, so that you may pass unharmed into your eternal home.

As strangers here, we pray this day,

“Therefore, grant to Your people that they may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the manifold changes of this world our hearts may ever be fixed where true joys are found.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.