

Preacher: Tim Hollenberg-Duffey

Scripture: John 14:1-14

¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

⁹ Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Maybe some of you have heard of the Camino de Santiago. Or for short— the Camino. Literally translated from Spanish to English, it means the Way of Saint James. It is a path or a network of paths, a hiking trail across the northern part of Spain that has served as a pilgrimage trail for Christians since medieval times. One hiking blog describes it as Medieval Catholicism’s version of the Appalachian Trail. The Way, El Camino, is still a hiking destination for some nearly 200,000 people each year.¹ Now certainly not all of these hikers are pilgrims, some are hikers out for the fun of exploring a new trail in the beauty of nature, but some are true pilgrims who walk with a prayer on their heart that, as they walk this way, their life might be conformed to the way.

Jesus’ “I am” statement for this morning, which continues our sermon series on the “I am” sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, is from John 14--“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus is teaching the disciples about the way to the Father--How do we find the father? How do we find the Kingdom of God? How do we find heaven? Jesus has said he’s about to leave them, so the disciples want to be sure that without Jesus, they are going to know the way. So, Thomas, one of the disciples, comes right out and asks in verse 5: “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” To which Jesus responds, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Know Jesus and you have the way laid out for you. But this doesn’t seem to be quite enough for the disciples as Phillip chimes in and says, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Sure, that will be enough for you. The way lies right in front of them and they do not realize it; the Father is before them and they do not realize it.

¹ Martin, Craig. <https://www.outsideonline.com/1917861/walking-camino-de-santiago-beginners-guide>

So, whose way is it? The disciples want it their way wish the way were my way. We all wish *the* way were *our* way. But our ways are exclusive--“It’s my way or the highway.” When we do things our way, we lead ourselves astray.

Commentary points our attention to the phrase “my father’s house” which appears at the beginning of our scripture reading today. It’s part of a familiar teaching: “My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?” Some of you know the text as, “In my father’s house there are many *mansions or rooms.*” The point is that we understand that to mean that heaven has much space and even a place for each of us and for that reason this is a popular text to use at funerals. But what I want us to know is that this little phrase “my father’s house” is used one other time in John’s Gospel and that is in Chapter 2 when Jesus goes to the temple and drives out the buyers and sellers. The money changers are cheating people and he says, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” Jesus is saying that the temple is his Father’s house, but then he goes on to say to the crowd “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John explains that he does not mean this physical temple but the temple of his body, crucified and in 3 days risen again.²

All of this explanation of “my father’s house” should help us to understand that the home of God is not restricted to a building structure like the temple, nor is it some mansion in the sky—no, it should be best thought of as the body of Christ--the body of Christ which comes to be the church universal—a body of believers, a mobile home of sorts, a network of mobile homes, Jesus on the move.

The way of Jesus can be limited by us when we misconstrue our structural preferences with the way of Jesus. The elite Jews confused the temple with the way of the Lord so much so that they manipulated it for their financial gain. What things that work in our comfortable favor have we confused with the only way of Jesus? Can we accept that the body of Christ will not all look the same or do things the same way? Can we accept that the way this congregation has always done things isn’t necessarily the way Christ's path will move us forward?

When we do things our way. we are exclusive--my way or the highway.

But Jesus’ way is radically inclusive in that it includes anyone who would deny their way in pursuit, in discernment of his. All who are on his path, who are in the Body of Christ are those who have denied themselves to take up their cross and follow. That is the way of Jesus, a way of the cross.

We convince ourselves that we don’t need our own self-seeking ways and we can pursue Jesus completely. Yikes, that’s the hardest decision you’ll ever make. As we prepare for the baptism of three individuals who are making such a decision to try to live into this Jesus way by starting off in claiming him as Lord, we are going to sing a simple song--“Lord, I want to be a Christian.” They are such simple, strong words claiming a desire to be a Christian--“in my heart.” “In my Heart” though seems to be the modifier of importance acknowledging that *in here*, I want to be a Christian, but *out here* it is so hard to surrender my will. *In here*, I love Jesus *Out here*, I’m looking at the world; I’m looking at the cross.

That’s the Jesus way, letting go of us and finding God takes hold.

Scott Hoezee interprets this story from neurologist Oliver Sacks about Tourette’s Syndrome, which is a disorder that causes victims to have any number of physical and verbal tics. Some people with Tourette’s have constant facial twitches. Others find themselves uncontrollably uttering verbal whoops, beeps, and sometimes also raunchy swear words. One

²<http://girardianlectionary.net/reflections/year-a/easter5a/>

man with Tourette's whom Dr. Sacks knew was given to deep, lunging bows toward the ground, a few verbal shouts and, also, an obsessive-compulsive type adjusting and readjusting of his glasses. The kicker is that the man is a skilled surgeon! Somehow and for some unknown reason, when he dons mask and gown and enters the operating room, all his tics disappear for the duration of the surgery. He loses himself in that role and he does so totally. When the surgery is finished, he returns to those quirks of adjusting his glasses, shouting, and bowing.³

This man has a God-given gift to save people's physical lives through surgical procedures. And as he surrenders to this purpose, there is no tic that will get in the way of this.

Now, most of us have more control over our tics that keep us from surrendering to God. We choose to withhold a part of ourselves from going the way with Jesus. But the way requires all of us. And when we know this way and have seen it in the person, Jesus, we have no excuse for asking for more. There's no, "God maybe do this for me and I'll throw my whole self in." There's no, "God show me the Father, then I'll join the way." All we've needed is Jesus Christ who is revealed to us in his words. And if we claim his way, we will be included in his body.

Once on the way with the body of Christ, we will be transformed.

Just as Jesus sets out on the way with a strange donkey parade on Palm Sunday and the people praising him with palms, there's no turning back from the transformation that is about to come. Palm Sunday is like the King's inaugural parade--there's no leaving the way behind at this point. Your radical statement has been made--Jesus is Lord. And while death is on the horizon, so is transformed life.

Alan Roxburgh says it's like a pair of prescription glasses. Once you've progressed to a new prescription on your glasses, you can't go back. The moment has already begun; there's no going back to your former prescription to rescue you. Now you see more clearly. Your sight has been transformed and so will your life on the Jesus way. Your old self with your old ways is gone.⁴

Or maybe you remember the opening of the 2003 movie *Seabiscuit* starring Tobey Maguire about an undersized racehorse. The opening of this depression-era film has nothing to do with horses though. Alan Roxburgh describes the scene:

"A man, wearing a shop apron and gators to protect his shirt sleeves, loiters outside a new business: CS Howard's Bicycles--a modest storefront where bicycles are sold and repaired. There's just one problem—Charles Howard has no customers. In fact, viewers soon see Charles dozing on a bench, waiting for business that never materializes. People wander by, and carriages fill the streets, but no one, it seems, is interested in the expertise this aspiring entrepreneur has to offer.

"Then suddenly, Charles's fortunes change. A man pulls up driving a Stanley automobile with steam billowing from under its hood. 'The boiler blew on me,' says the driver. 'Can you fix it?' Charles thinks for a moment and then responds with a confident, 'Sure.' In true movie fashion, an inspired Charles not only manages to fix the strange new machine, but dramatically improves its performance as well. As a result, he abandons the bicycle business to become a highly successful automobile dealer."⁵

Leave behind your old way. Follow the way that Jesus presents to you. Jump in fully and be transformed. You won't be able to go back, for the Jesus' way is now your own. Today, we

³<http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/easter-5a/?term=Tourette's%20Syndrome>

⁴ Roxburgh, Alan. *The Sky is Falling*. ACI Publishing: Eagle, Idaho, 2005. 47

⁵ *Ibid.* 19.

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accept new members into this church and several of these new members will be baptized today and some at a later time. As the Body of Christ, we bear witness to these decisions to leave behind my way and choose the way of Christ. May this be a reminder of transformation for all of us as we remember our commitment to the Jesus way. Amen.