

Dear Friends,

The lessons for this Sunday offer us moments of focus on the goodness of God as our refuge. Clearly, in this time of quarantine burn-out and grief, profound for some, this Word of God to us could be more than just a comfort. We can strive to a new experience of "the Peace of Christ."

When we think of Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life, we hear that Christ the Life-Giver invites us, makes a place for us to be at the Kingdom of God's banquet now, not just in the heavenly realm. Even the disciples, Thomas and Philip, are confused about the message of Jesus. And yet, in John 14, Jesus is at his "pastoral best." "Let your hearts not be troubled."

In the midst of the gloom and grief that rides with us through our season of pandemic, can you remember the mighty acts of Jesus in his time and the mighty acts of love in our time that changed the world then and now? Such acts of kindness and love are being reported more and more.

Jesus invites us to place our spiritual energies on the side of hope. With God and in life, there is always a long journey of incubation and trial and error. With God, we travel for a long time on a slow road of gradual change and preparation for those moments of great potential and dramatic shift, for those moments when we experience the grace or mercy of God.

Like the disciples before us, we are being prepared for a great turning, to take a great leap forward seeking Christ as the WAY in all walks of life and especially as we wear our masks and wash our hands and stand six feet apart. We are practicing how to be Church during stay-at-home orders and closed doors. Pray for the Peace of Christ.

The Peace of the Lord Be always with you.

In Christ, Beverly+

PRAYER

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; though Jesus Christ you Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER PATHWAYS **MAY 10, 2020**

Lessons of the Day PSALM 31:1-5, 15-16; Acts 7: 55-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10;
John 14:1-14

Refuge in the Goodness of God

The term “refuge” rings uniquely true in today’s world. Under orders to “shelter in place,” many of us are reconfiguring our households to be fortresses against an unseen but deadly foe: COVID-19. Armed with masks and disinfectant, we raise the drawbridge and fortify our homes in a society-wide attempt to “flatten the curve.”

This week’s readings also deal with the topic of refuge. For the psalmist, God is a “refuge” (*ma’oz*) from danger (Psalm 31:2, 4), and John’s Jesus offers heavenly shelter for his disciples troubled hearts, promising to prepare for them a heavenly home (John 14:1). Today’s texts remind us that to live on this earth is to live with both the light and the darkness, LIFE AND DEATH.

As the current pandemic makes clear, some members of our society struggle to “endure” the rage of the pandemic more than others. Part of our struggle against COVID-19 is to acknowledge and address the needs of those who are particularly vulnerable to the virus’ cruel consequences. We shelter in place and socially isolate for important reasons, not only for our own health but also for the health of others.

This week’s texts could not be timelier. In this moment of heightened anxiety, it is important to remember that true peace, the peace of the Gospel, does not come from our attempts to protect ourselves from earthly harm. No leader, vaccine, or test can truly bring peace. These are important, but they do not bring the peace of Christ.

The peace described variously in this week’s texts does not depend upon a calm storm, the end of adverse conditions, or the removal of distress. To the contrary, the peace of God holds us safely, even while we are “beset as a city under siege” (Psalm 31) or suffering from the lashings of “quarantine burnout.” The psalmist invites us to trust because we know that “my times are in your hands” (verse 15).

This is not merely resignation to fate. It is a deep trust in the goodness of God, even when God's goodness is hidden or obscure.

In John 14, part of Final Discourses in the Gospel of John, Jesus addresses his troubled disciples and calls upon them to "believe in God" (John 14:1), whose love and works they have concretely seen in the person of Jesus: "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" (John 14:11).

Even though, Jesus foresees his own death and imagines the persecution of his disciples, he tells his disciples not to be troubled, but instead to "believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). Jesus calls the disciples to find peace in his trustworthiness, despite the building storm clouds.

It's the kind of peace that prevails in the thick of the battle. It's the kind of peace that configures a life longer than death. It's the kind of peace that looks at death, sacrifice, sickness and illness and knows that in close relationship with God in **Christ we are on the receiving end of his offer of life...NOW IS THE TIME TO DO THE SEARCH FOR GOD'S PEACE.** Thanks be to God.

Faithfully, Beverly+