

## What way to go

John 14:1-14

May 10, 2020

Where are we going?

Do you know where we are going?

“. . . we don't know where you are going . . . “

Have you ever heard those or similar words before? Maybe from a colleague, maybe from a family member when you are driving or walking somewhere.

I know someone, a young person, who would constantly ask the family, I really mean the parents, “Where are we going?” The parents always suggested that the questioner watch where they were, watch the landmarks and then you will begin to recognize where we are going. The youngster was always amazed and blurted out, “I didn’t know we were going to nanny and gump’s house.” when the family car pulled into the grandparent’s driveway.

And as the youngster matured and began talking about wanting to learn to drive, the parents questioned whether or not they should allow the car to be used by someone who was geographically challenged. How could the family car be entrusted to someone who did not know where they were going and did not know how to get there.

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How can we know the way? It's a fitting and unsettling question for times such as these. In the last few months, with no outline, no road map, no blueprint before us, we have found ourselves propelled into a landscape of unexpected unemployment, massive layoffs, and huge government incentives; all because of a small microscopic virus.

We are off the road and we don’t know where we are going! Most of us have not traveled through a world-wide pandemic and at times we feel as if we are being swept along in one direction; “social distancing”, and now increasingly we have begun to hear that contact is being allowed in different parts of Canada. We are confused. We are in unfamiliar territory, arriving at destinations not of our own choosing. As we seek to make sense of the landscape, we wonder which path to take. Which direction is correct? How can we know the way?

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How can we, Christians, know the way? That is the same question the disciples ask Jesus. While they have been with Jesus nearly his entire ministry, they don’t understand what he means when he speaks of his departure; he told them that where he is going, they cannot follow (Jn 13:36). But then he speaks of places that are being prepared for them. This idea that their communion with him might continue after he is gone baffles them. They fail to comprehend what dwelling places with God have to do with their lives in the present. Jesus’ assumption that they know where he is going compels Thomas to express their ignorance and uncertainty: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus' answer does not seem very helpful to his disciples: he tells them that if they know God, then they know him. But even that is not clear enough.

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Remember the child I spoke of earlier – well it seems that when she began to drive, she got lost a few times, not knowing where she was going. Her mother, thank you to all the mothers that have helped their children in the past, came to the rescue and arranged for a cell phone. Now this cell phone was GPS enabled and allowed this teenager to go many places

without getting lost and over time, the landmarks began to become familiar and the cell phone with its GPS was no longer needed.

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In a world-wide pandemic where do we go? What assistance is available to us? The best we can do is to follow the advice of those who are more knowledgeable, who have dealt with epidemics in the past, like Dr. Bonnie Henry who has dealt with SARS, Ebola, H1N1 and polio during her career. She suggested that we close schools, avoid large gatherings of people and practice social distancing. Those are the steps that have helped flatten the curve and shouldn't we continue to follow the road map that she continues to lay out for us?

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In 2020, how can we Christians, know the way? In uncertain times - like those of the disciples and us - many are looking for direction and guidance. Jesus declares himself the "way, and the truth, and the life," opening up new possibilities for relationship and communion with him. He speaks about knowing him by his words and works, thus revealing not only himself, but the very heart of God. Jesus does not declare us "off the road" but instead invites us to **The Way** - a path of action and witness, discovered as we look at him, and as we look like him.

Like landmarks that help us on a journey or the advice from the epidemic experts - it is the relationship to others that mark the works of Jesus, pointing the way to God. When he fed the hungry, healed the sick, spoke to outsiders, Jesus revealed not only his own loving, justice-driven nature but that of God's. He says to the disciples, if you want to know what God looks like, look at my relationships with others, then you'll see God. Just as a map on an iPhone reveals relationships between places and people, our own actions reveal the relationships we have with the world in a way that can point others to God.

We show **The Way** when we embody the love and mercy of Jesus in our own lives, in our own surroundings. When we serve soup in the men's shelter, comfort women who've experienced abuse, give clothing to children who don't have enough, we become the way for others who are searching for God. When we gather for worship, stand for justice, weep with the oppressed, and welcome the stranger, (whether it's in a church sanctuary or on our phones or computers during this world pandemic) that's when we become the path that leads to love, that leads to God. Jesus tells the disciples to believe that he and God are one, but if they cannot, then "believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves" (v. 11b). Likewise, if others cannot believe the words we say, then the lives we live must point the way.

Just as the disciples looked to Jesus to discover **The Way**, others are looking at us today. As people of faith, we have a responsibility to translate our belief into action so that others may see what we do and find themselves invited to follow **The Way**.

How can we know **The Way**? We know **The Way** when we allow our hearts to be captured by the love and grace of God demonstrated in the tangible ministries of Jesus. We become **The Way** for others when we live lives that embody that mercy in the world around us, followers of **The Way** giving light to others on the path. Amen