

On this the 5th Sunday of Easter we are thrown back in time, before the cross, before resurrection, when the hopes and dreams of the disciples were centered on the powers in this world.

We listen as Jesus prepares his closest companions for the grief that is coming like a thief in the night. The disciples are totally unaware = not prepared for the coming grief of the cross.

And when it happens, they, like us, will travel toward the dark places of grief, and linger among the unanswerable question of Why.

We listen in as Jesus gathers his disciples in the long hours of evening after the Last supper. Jesus has called a family meeting, so to speak, to lay out the plan, to show his beloved friends the Way.

He needs to steady them for the rough road ahead - reassure them about the future. "I go to prepare a place for you," he says. It will be a place to **dwell**, to **linger** and **thrive** with Him and in Him with God.

Jesus who has shown us the heart of God
is about to prepare a place for us in the heart of God,
He tells them, "You belong to me and I belong to you. You will not lose me and I will not lose you."

But perhaps, when we are confronted with such soul wrenching grief, we are mostly concerned about losing ourselves: losing our work, our security, our friends and family, our core being ...even our lives. In times like these, feeble faith is often all we can manage. So we stand in the varying shadows of the

Cross, where danger is real, danger both from outside forces and from the weakness within ourselves.

We fear for ourselves, but we also fear our own willingness to sacrifice the health and lives of our 'less worthy' neighbors': the aged, the poor, people of color, most of NYC.

And we are quick to blame a pantheon of 'others': political opponents, arrogant scientists, power hungry government leaders. In the dark shadows, we are quick to say the Chinese caused it or Billionaires plotted it. We are frustrated and we are afraid.

So where will our refuge be in this time with no answers? How can we turn to God, to offer thanks as the waters rise around us? How do we entrust our future life to God, and sustain a deep trust in the goodness of God *when God's goodness is hidden and obscured?*

Where do we find peace?

We will need to look through the Cross to the dawn of Easter and the promise it holds. We cling to the promise until that time when we are able to pray, "Into your hands O Lord I commend my spirit"

Jesus understands all this. He begins this tender moment with "Do not let your hearts be troubled; believe in God; believe also in me. I AM the Way – follow my lead and I will lead you home – to the place where you can dwell: a place to stop and to know peace.

It is love that makes the way. No matter what happens, how dark it looks, how powerful the obstacles, and impossible the odds, **Love finds its way forward to life at the heart of God.**

Every day you and I have to make decisions about who is worthy of our trust, who can lead us home: scientists? Governors? economists and stock analysts? We watch them on the news and read their advice in the paper.

But how do we cling to a trust in a God we cannot see? It is hard....so Jesus teaches us: if you can't believe in anything else, believe the signs:

tireless servants struggling to save the lives of strangers

boxes of pasta pulled from scarce pantries to feed strangers,

handwritten notes and unexpected phone calls to assure others they are not forgotten

dozens of face mask sown on old Singer machines to protect the lives of strangers

And of course the ultimate sign of the power of God's love to endure every cross laid before its path told in these words

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, 3 women went to the tomb and declared "He is not here. He has been raised." This is the sign which assures us of the dwelling place where God says "Here is my heart, waiting for you." And we respond, "here is my heart, trusting in you."

Do not be afraid, Jesus says, I go to prepare a place for you to dwell, right there, in the heart of God. Lord grant us the courage this day to say, Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Amen