

Rev. Luke C. Werre
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Easter 5

John 14:1-12

CHRIST IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER

There is not a more secure place for a 3-year-old than to be held in the crook of her daddy's arm. Even when you grow up and are on your own it can be nice to check with your father when you are trying to make a decision about something. Getting his input gives you a sense that everything is going to be OK. That's something you sorely miss when he's gone. You can't pick up the phone anymore and find out what would he say.

Thankfully, God our heavenly Father does not ever change or leave us. He is always our "safe place" and our sense of equilibrium.

But the truth is, sometimes we don't feel it that way. From school locker to living room to cubicle to out-patient surgery to dirty laundry to credit card to parking lot to tax forms -we're stressed. Even scared. We're in over our heads. We're behind. We have all we can do just to get by. If some look at us and think we've got it together it's only because we're good at faking it, but sometimes we're not so good at faking it. Sometimes we might even come close to despairing and intensely wishing we were just out of our situation.

It's a desperate feeling because God is a spirit and we are human so we don't see or feel Him anywhere. Sometimes we don't necessarily want to face Him because we feel a little guilty about the way things are in our lives. We need our heavenly Father to take care of us, but where is He when we need Him? How can we want to be assured that He hasn't turn away from us? Christ. In Christ we find our heavenly Father. In Christ we find His thoughts toward us. Jesus' words today tell us that Christ is the way to the

Father. Let us consider that Christ is the way to the Father first, because He takes us to the Father's house, and secondly, because He speaks to us the Father's words.

Teenagers, even when you are married and have a family of your own you will still find, provided all things are well, that you are never so relaxed as when you visit your parents. Maybe it's a carry-over from childhood that a person feels most sheltered in their parents' house.

Imagine what a relief it will be finally to be in our heavenly Father's house. And you know what the most beautiful part is? Jesus does not give you and me instructions on how to get there – you and me who barely survive doing the bare minimum. To the contrary, Christ Himself takes us there.

It was the night before His death. Remember the turmoil the disciples were in? Their confusion and fright –the way they fled? So Christ said, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 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."*

Christ points their hearts and minds ahead, beyond all the scary, confusing events of the next couple of days, to His ascension into heaven. He points our hearts and minds ahead, beyond all the pain, griefs, duress, suffering, heartache and problems to the Last Day of the world when He comes back to take us home. Christ does it all. He worked our way to heaven. He paid the penalty for our sins by His death on the cross. He bought us out of this existence with His own blood.

Is there a happier thought for us Christians? Our final relief will be our heavenly home in our Father's house. We can rest in Jesus' arms who will take us there. Christ is the way to the Father because he takes us to our Father's house.

But what is there to give us relief in the meantime? The fact that Christ comes back even now through His Word. Christ is the way to the Father because He speaks to us the Father's Word.

If we want to see God, we need only to look at Jesus. There we see everything we need to know about God or what God thinks of us. In fact, apart from Jesus we can't know God. Jesus said to His disciples, "*You know the way to the place where I am going.*" Thomas said to him, *'Lord we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'* Jesus answered, *'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'*"

Isn't that the greatest news? We don't have to come up with a way to be with God or to find the heavenly Father. We don't have to look around for Him or search our hearts for Him or grasp for signs from Him. We don't have to follow a way to Him. Jesus didn't *show* us a way. He *is* the way. There's nothing left but to ride on Him or to trust in Him. His good works. His sufferings and death. His resurrection. His ascension into heaven. He is the one who secured our Father-child relationship with God for us. He is the one who takes us to the Father.

But the disciple Philip raised a question that might still be on our minds too. He said, "*Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.*" 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'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?'*"

Yet we still have this lingering problem. Christ ascended into heaven. We can't see Him. How can He be the way to the Father if we can't even see Him? Jesus answered that question. He said, "*The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.*"

You and I know Jesus by knowing His Words. Christ is the way to the Father because He speaks to us the Father's Word. And that Word is always a Word of forgiveness.

Sometimes we get distracted by our problems. We dismiss God's Word as being any real help. It doesn't seem to give us a satisfactory answer, it isn't a quick enough fix, it doesn't feel relevant. In our panic or distress we are grasping anywhere for help whether it's from the Word of God or not. You see how quickly our sinful nature takes a detour and separates us from God?

But listen to Christ now who says you are forgiven. Receive Him in the Sacrament to prove it. Christ removes your sin and reconciles you to your heavenly Father. That's why He came in the first place and why He comes to you now through His Word. That's how He saves you. Christ is the way to the Father because He speaks to us the Father's Word.

Christ is whom we've come here to see. Family relationships here on earth are a boon and a blessing from God. But Christ alone keeps us connected to our heavenly Father and will bring us to our heavenly home.