

The Heart of the Community

May 7th, 2023

John 14:1-14

Rev. Paulette Mixon-Weller

The last words before someone dies are so important. My dad had dementia, and he told me how he hoped I moved closer. Within that message I know he meant he loved me and missed me being closer to home.

Funerals are for the living. Yes we acknowledge that Heaven has a place for us, but more importantly to us right now is that we can keep on living.

God is revealed to us in Jesus- in the way he lived with love, grace, mercy, forgiveness; in the truth he lived that God is for us and wants a relationship now and that everyone matters; in the life he lived of abiding with God the Father or Loving Parent.

Jesus often went up a mountain to pray. Jesus maintained a close connection with God throughout his life on earth. Yes there are many rooms in Heaven, but more importantly right now the Host of Heaven requests our presence daily- in the dwelling place of our hearts.

Have you noticed that sometimes our community seems to feel things together? We swell with pride when we see locals succeed. We grieve together when someone dies. We laugh together; we

learn together. We go up and down on the waves of life and emotion together.

Our Gospel lesson for today begins with Jesus saying to his gathered disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled." The Greek makes this statement more interesting. The "your" is plural but "heart" is singular. So really it should read, "Let not y'all's heart be troubled." One collective heart.

In the 80s there was a song called "Two of Hearts." Two of Hearts, 2 hearts that beat as one... We can be of one heart, and our heart can be at peace.

Our text lands us in the middle of the Farewell Discourse. Jesus is saying Good bye and giving his disciples hope for the future. Jesus' mission was to make known the Father. If you know Jesus, you know the Father. And knowing the Father, you have an eternal place with Him. Jesus said that he is going to prepare a place in the Father's house for each of them. That place will be a place of intimacy with God and with Jesus. A place of love and peace.

Thomas asked how to get to that place. Jesus replied, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

If you're like me at all, the pandemic reminded me how little control I have over my own life. We really don't have as much control as we pretend we have. That is so anxiety producing. Life is mysterious. Some things we do know: Jesus whole mission was to reveal the Father to us.

Jesus revealed God as love, as parent, as healer. Stephen had seen the great love revealed in Jesus. He also saw Jesus standing victoriously at the right side of God. His death- both of their deaths, were violent and awful. As are deaths today like the senseless gun violence but God then and now can bring redemption out of the worst of humanity. Romans 8:28 God works all things for the good.

I don't see that as God causing all things, but God heals and does good out of everything. As a result of Stephen's death, the disciples scattered all over the earth. The church spread far and wide.

Jesus the way, the truth and the life is a call to follow the way of non-violent love and ministry of Jesus, to live the truth that God cares about each of us as individuals and as a community, and to truly deeply fully live an abundant life here and now, loving all those around us.

Let's often say words to those we will leave behind someday- words of love and growth, of healing and hope, words that point to the God that reaches out to us in constant love and grace. Amen.