

The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
5/14/2017  
John 14:1-14

“Let not your hearts be troubled; *even though the world is filled with beautiful and terrible things!*” (F. Buechner)

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled.”*

An untold number of generations of Christians have seen the opening words from John's Gospel reading this morning as some of the most comforting words which Holy Scripture offers.

While the Christian faith is about vastly more than just comfort or feeling good, Jesus' words to his followers “*do not let your hearts be troubled for I am the way, the truth and the life and I go prepare a place for you, so that where I am, there you may also be*” are indeed words of comfort and solace.

They are words of solace for those who are following with Jesus in John's gospel but they can be just as comforting for us who follow Jesus today.

We are reading these words of Jesus in John's gospel this fifth Sunday of the Easter season of Sundays, however the context for Jesus interaction with his followers is Jerusalem at the last supper and just before Jesus is to be betrayed, arrested and executed.

In this last discourse or speech of Jesus, it seems that he has so much to tell his followers and not much time in which to tell it.

There is so much urgency about what Jesus is telling his disciples.

Instead, what Jesus tells them has little to do with what is going to happen to **HIM**.

What Jesus tells the ones who will be left behind has everything to do with **THEM**.

Jesus' words have to do with the rest of **THEIR** lives **NOT** with the rest of his own life.

The situation is reminiscent of when a parent leaves a child with a baby-sitter for the first time or the first time we leave our older children alone at home for a period of time.

There is so much to remind the sitter of, or to remind our children of that we must finally force ourselves to leave for our appointment, trip or whatever.

The problem is not about what is going to happen to us but the problem is about what could happen in our absence.

In Jesus' final discourse, the problem is not about what is going to happen to Jesus in the next few hours and days -- the problem is about what will happen to his followers -- to his friends -- to the disciples Jesus is about to leave behind.

In this setting of the final speech of Jesus [the setting of the last supper], Jesus knows that the world of his disciples and for that fact the whole world is going to become troubled beyond their understanding and expectations and it will never be the same for them again.

Don't be afraid, for the world is filled with beautiful and also terrible things! [F. Buechner]

So the theme of this little talk between Jesus and his friends is reassurance.

Reassurance for **THEM** that when Jesus is gone from this world and the reassurance for them is that *Jesus is the way to the Father who is in heaven and that Jesus will not leave them alone without help.*

Do not let your hearts be troubled: for the world is filled with beautiful and also terrible things! [F. Buechner]

- in spite of how the world may appear to you when I am gone from your presence
- And in spite of the fact that their world is about to become almost unbearably difficult. *Do not let your hearts be troubled.*

Our world has plenty of “unbearableness” to it also:

- Our lives do not always lead where we plan
- We will grow older
- We will grow infirm
- We will suffer grief
- Those we love will leave us
- People we care about will change & become ill and die
- Things will not always go the way we desire (which is of course in our world of today an anathema a terrible disappointment)

I said earlier that the Christian faith is about vastly more than just comfort or feeling good and about more than getting our way.

The Christian faith and life is about coming to be peopling who:

- follow Christ’s example, always (even when we fall woefully short in our personal lives of achieving that example – we continue to follow it)

The Christian faith and life is about coming to be people who:

- Model their actions in life on Christ’s teaching of loving one another and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves.

The Christian faith and life is about coming to be people who:

- Look to the future and give of ourselves for people who will come long after us without regard for ourselves (another of those anathema or anti-themes in our world).

The Christian faith and life is about coming to be people who:

- Desire to walk hand in hand with God and learn to do so.
- And who know that even though the world is filled with both beautiful and terrible things, that situation makes the words of Jesus to care for the downtrodden and sick and ill and addicted and pain filled and hungry even more important
- For this world is filled with both beautiful and terrible things.

The Christian faith and life is about coming to be people who seemingly are more than a bit out of place in this modern world – but it has always been so in the 2000 years of Christian history – and it is not about to change for us and for our children.

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled.” He is always with us. Even in a world filled with both beautiful and terrible things!*