

Good morning and happy Mother's Day! Today's a special day in many ways. Today we celebrate our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and caregivers. We celebrate the people who love us with all their hearts and souls. It's fitting then, that we should be learning about Christ's love today through his words of comfort and guidance to his disciples.

Some of you may not know this, but I'm a reading teacher. I love words and I love sharing those words with my students. I truly believe that if you can understand what you read that you can learn just about anything. Be it a skill, an idea, a strategy, or a life lesson, it exists on the pages of books for the taking. Luckily, we Christians have a book of our very own and I've been privileged to study it with so many friends here at Saint David's during adult forum.

If you haven't joined us for Adult Forum yet, I really can't endorse it enough. A group of people with such different lives and backgrounds and interests all coming together with one common purpose, to understand our relationship with God through the study of scripture. No judgements, just ideas shared.

It's in the spirit of that group of people that I looked at today's gospel reading from John, chapter 14.

In adult forum, the first question we ask after reading scripture is "what jumped out at you?" This is what struck me from today's reading.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

I've struggled with this passage, these two sentences for quite some time. It seems so simple, yet, much like the rest of our lives, it's nuanced, complicated. However, I think we can all agree on a central theme. We come to know the father through Jesus. We are saved by Christ's love and sacrifice. And not only this, but also through his life. Christ led by example

and taught with his actions and words. To more deeply understand Jesus' message in this chapter, as with any reading, it's important to consider the context.

This exchange between Christ and his disciples takes place shortly after Judas' betrayal, while they're making their way to Jerusalem. Jesus knows his time here on Earth is growing short and he needs to prepare the disciples to continue without him.

How do you prepare someone to go on without you? What message can you give to someone to carry them through their loss and help them live without your love and guidance? In the previous chapter of John, Christ foretold his own betrayal and death, but it appears that his disciples don't fully understand the urgency and depth of his message and meaning.

While walking with his disciples to Jerusalem after their difficult conversations, Jesus found himself in a position teachers live for, a teachable moment. His followers were all thinking about the same thing, trying to understand what he'd revealed only just a short time before. They were ready to hear what he had to say and to understand it. Christ knew the end was coming, that he'd soon be crucified; that his disciples would be left without his physical presence to guide them. He wanted to provide comfort in the difficult time to come, to tell them that they would always have a place with him. So, he shared a metaphor he knew they'd understand, that of the bridegroom going ahead to prepare a place for his bride.

To modern ears, this seems like the least comprehensible part of the whole exchange. To us, it sounds like Christ is going to heaven to build us a house or set a place for us at the dinner table. However, in Christ's time, this was a logical and culturally relevant explanation. When a couple was getting ready for their marriage, the bridegroom would go ahead of his bride to prepare a place for their new life together in his parents' home. He would literally go to his father's house and add a room so they would have their own separate space where they could be

together, learn about one another, and live together. Christ told them, told us, that he would go ahead like a bridegroom to welcome us into his father's, into God's house. He would prepare room for us all to live and be with him.

The disciples would have understood and found comfort in this metaphor, but much like me, they didn't understand how they were supposed to find this place. Jesus said "You know the way to the place where I am going" and his disciples replied in confusion. They asked what we all want to know; how could we possibly know how to get to this wonderful place with God if we've never seen it, if the messages we're always getting from our society are mixed at best? The directions don't always seem clear. Christ, ever patient, shared his simple answer. "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

In saying this, Christ was giving us the clearest directions he could. He said "**I** am the way." Do what I do. **Reflect on my words and works.** In this same chapter, Jesus said "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these..." As a child, I thought he meant working miracles like healing the sick and feeding the multitudes. But now I understand, Christ showed us the way to our own salvation through his life and works. We may not be able to heal with a touch or word, but our hands and words can give comfort to the lonely and sick. We can't feed thousands with a single loaf of bread, but we can share what we have. Jesus was right, we come to the father through him. Through modeling our lives after his actions. By...doing what Jesus would do.

In these troubled times, it's so hard to know the right thing to do. We need to stop and think, which is challenging on a normal day, and ask ourselves the age-old question "What Would Jesus Do?" Do you remember those bracelets everyone had in the 90s that said "WWJD" (What Would Jesus Do)? I thought they were so silly in high school, but now I think they should

really make a comeback. However, they shouldn't be a token anymore; they ought to be a challenge.

What would Jesus do? I think Jesus would help when he could. He would offer comfort to those around him. Jesus would accept and embrace people different from himself. He would give all that he could. No more, no less. Jesus would love his neighbor as himself.

The commandment Christ gave his disciples just one chapter prior to this revelation of directions, is perhaps the most challenging. The all-encompassing statement of will to do what he did—Love God above all things and love your neighbor as yourself – is the way that we are called to follow Christ. Christ's sacrifice **threw open the door to God's kingdom** and his example gave us the directions to get there.

However, following in Christ's path is no small feat. I'll tell you, I fall short on a good day. I'm not always patient. I don't always love my neighbor as myself, especially when I'm alone in my car. But I hope we get credit for trying. Hopefully, one day, I might get it right and really follow Christ as he'd intended.

Until then, I draw comfort in knowing that he's already set the door open, already readied a place for me, for you, for all of us with him. At our baptism, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever. This means that we have a place waiting for us. It means that by coming to Earth, Christ showed us the way. He's always been here to guide us if we just look at our instruction manual. He came to earth and he experienced life with us mere mortals. He comforted the sick, fed the hungry, forgave the sinner, wept for and with his friends, and taught us all the way to the Father's house.

The authors of the book, Feasting on the Word, I think put it best by saying that Christ's message to us in John 14 is that "his death is not the end, but the beginning of the 'way.'" He was laying the path for us to follow to the father's house.

**Christ is my path.** Jesus has shown us the way. He was always there, guiding, supporting, leading, and comforting us; feeling the same things we have felt, and **he will always love us.**

Pastor Elizabeth likes to end her sermons with a question, so in her honor I'll leave you with one as well.

How will you follow Christ in your life? How will you do what Jesus would do?