

## **“The LOGOS Way”**

Acts 7:5-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

May 14, 2017 -- 5th Of Easter

Acts 7:55-60 (NRSV) But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. {56} "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" {57} But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. {58} Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. {59} While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." {60} Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

1 Peter 2:2-10 (NRSV) Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation-- {3} if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. {4} Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and {5} like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. {6} For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." {7} To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," {8} and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. {9} But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. {10} Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

John 14:1-14 (NRSV) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. {2} In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? {3} And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. {4} And you know the way to the place where I am going." {5} Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" {6} Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. {7} If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." {8} Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." {9} Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? {10} Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. {11} Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. {12} 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, because I am going to the Father. {13} I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Today, we are reminded in the gospel of John that Jesus is the way. That Jesus himself is both the direction we are called to go, the way to get there and the destination.

A colleague in ministry, in her discussion of this passage relates that not everyone is good with things that have to do with the way – like directions and things. She says, “My husband and I sometimes have slight miscommunication about directions. GPS has made this so much smoother, but we’ve still got our hang-ups. The primary issue is that I explain things in a way that makes sense, and he only confuses the situation by using fancy terms like streets, routes and road names. The other day, when I was stuck around a really nasty accident, I called my husband to help me navigate around the mess.

“Hey, I’m in town and there’s a big accident. Is there a back way around the store?” “What store?”

“Don’t be stupid. The grocery store. ” What other than food could possibly make me venture into town on a Saturday afternoon?

“Which grocery store?” he said.

“Please. “ I replied, “I don’t have time for this. How do I turn around on that road by the preschool?” “Are you on Rte. 100?”

“If by that, you mean the highway that goes by that shopping strip with the new Ruby Tuesdays in it, then yes.”

“Are you going north or south?”

I paused for a second to reflect and I said, “I’m going in the direction you go if you are driving from the Starbucks with the drive-thru to Target – the new one, not the old one. They have really cute new socks in the dollar aisle I thought Cindy would like, too.”

“Okay. What if you try to turn around by the gas station up by 322?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about. Listen, I have to tell you that they changed the name of the diner we used to go to. Also, before I forget, there is a new autobody shop with a sign out front that says, ‘Can we fix it? Yes we can!’”

I heard him sigh, he actually sighed and said, “Um, great.”

“Do you want me to try to get a picture and text it to you?”

“That’s okay.” He’s envisioning me running the minivan off the road in a desperate attempt to capture the shout-out to Bob the Builder, our son’s new hero.

“Alright,” I said, “what should I make for dinner?”

“Dinner?” he said in a tone that sounded a little exasperated, “What about your directions?”

“What directions?” I ask.

“You know, the way to get home around the accident.”

“Oh, that’s fine. It’s already clearing up and I’m on my way.”

As I said, “I love you too, honey,” I think I heard his head explode.

She writes, “I wonder if that’s how Jesus sounded when Thomas and then Philip prove how they just don’t get it.”

It is very convenient that in scripture Marielle read earlier from John we are given our friend Thomas who like most of us, has a question or two about things and who is like some of us, directionally challenged. Thomas, already has his doubts about the whole resurrection thing, and now what he hears from Jesus is about some place Jesus is going to go.

In effect, Jesus is telling them that he is about to leave them. He has to go away. Now we've all had that experience. We've all had to deal with someone going away from us. Someone on whom we have depended, someone we have, as did these disciples, shared life with... and now he is going away. Trying to allay their fears, he says: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going."

You know the way don't you? How many times, going...wherever....have you been asked that question? There seems to be an assumption in the asking, that you, know where it is that you will be going. You know the way...to the party, to the park, to the restaurant, to the principles office.... You know the way don't you? Jesus says," you know the place where I am going?" It makes sense that Jesus should have had that assumption about his disciples who have been following him for years....shouldn't they know where he's going...don't you think

talk about the kingdom was conversation fodder around the campfire at night?

But, there's Thomas, who we've already established is like us, who doesn't have a clue where or which way Jesus is going, much less the way. So Jesus, gives him directions and says to him and to us "I am the way...and the truth...and the life....no one comes to the father but by me..." "Where Jesus is going is a place, prepared for us. And he is the way to get us there.

There are so many things in this world that claim to be the way. So many influences and programs and people who all say, 'follow this, follow that, follow me...this is the way you should go.'" But none of them, not one single one, are the way. Not one of them can promise what the way has to offer. Not one of them can give more than momentary comfort, or security, or satisfaction. Not one of them can offer true peace. Not one of them can give abundant life. Not one of them can offer a way to God. None of them can bring offer us the very grace of God. But the way, can do all that. Because the way, Jesus Christ, is God. But the way isn't easy.

There was a little guy who was 9 who was inexplicably late for supper one evening. This was unusual, but his mom knew he'd been upset about something or other earlier in the day. She called everyone to the table and said, 'have the blessing, I'll be back in a minute.'" She ventured onto the front porch and looked out at the front steps. A place she knew this one liked to use as a thinking spot. She said softly, 'what's going on?' and he replied with all the bravado he could

muster, "I'm running away!" She said as she eased down next to him, 'well I'm really sorry to hear about that. We'll surely miss you.' "I have to" he said. She slid her arm around him and said, 'do you know which way going and where?' He thought a minute and said, not so sure of himself, "I'll figure it out." She said, putting her arm around him and holding closer, 'well, I fried chicken tonight and there's an apple pie for dessert.'" He paused, thinking, and said, "maybe I'll wait 'til after supper."

There's always more than one way to go in life. One way may be bright and shiny and compelling. It may have colored lights and images that dazzle the mind. It promises, in our minds at least the solution to all our problems. Running a-way seems sometimes to be a good and maybe the right choice.

Then there's the other way, which most of the time means having to admit we don't know the way at all. It means recognizing our vulnerability and our need to have someone else intervene on our behalf. It means we should just maybe not be so self-determining.

Jesus, the word of the living God, the LOGOS, is trying to show us the way, but like Thomas we can't seem to just follow. Sometimes like Philip we need to be convinced. Jesus, who lives and died for us says, "I am the way," but we want to see more, -- show us God. Is it any wonder Jesus gets frustrated and says, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?" Jesus is the way. He is God and he is God's way.

But we don't like following the way. Jesus way means we have to do things his way. We have to love like he loves. We have to accept the others like he does. We have to give up our pettiness and our prejudice and our preoccupation with the pursuit of things. We're just not prepared to do that. We're certainly not prepared to be like Stephen and die for him. (I guess if Stephen had of been packing it would have turned out differently.)

Like a 9 year old we'd rather run a different way even when we don't have a clue where we're going. Even with the promise of a house in the kingdom of God reserved for us. A room for eternity in a mansion of glory. Even with a table laden with fried chicken and apple pie.

The Jesus way is tough. But even though the way is hard, this way, Jesus way, unlike any other way, offers peace in the center of yourself, offers comfort in our sorrow and hope in our despair, and love that never, ever ends.

What does Jesus want us to know today about the way? The way to God, the way to hope, the way to happiness, the way to joy, the way to and eternal dwelling place? What he would have us know is that the way is Jesus. He is the way. If we are unsure, if we are frightened, if we are lost, if we are desperate, if we are alone, if we are vulnerable, if we are confused, if we come to a point in our lives where we're stuck behind an accident and need to know how to get home... there is only one way... a way of truth and life.

The one true way came to live among us -- and died for us -- and rose again. He has gone on before us and has promised to come again to us to show us the way to peace and rest.