

Sunday, May 14, 2017

I Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

I am the Way

Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed! As we continue in our celebration of Christ's resurrection in this season of Easter let us rejoice for Jesus is alive and His Spirit is with us now!

Happy Mothers' Day to all our mothers and those who serve as mothers to others. It is also Christian Family Sunday when we celebrate the joy and wonder of being brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus as a church family as well as Christians who gather together in families in the many configurations we have today of what makes a family!

How fast are you in responding to someone who is trying to make a joke—you know a one liner? Will Rogers an American humourist had the reputation that he could make anyone laugh. US President Calvin Coolidge had the reputation that he never laughed. Rogers was invited to visit the White House and as was the custom, the President's Assistance brought Rogers into the Oval Office where the President was sitting. The assistant upon entering the office said, President Coolidge, this is Will Rogers. Mr. Rogers, this is President Coolidge." Will Rogers leaned forward and said the assistant, "I'm sorry. I didn't catch his name?" With that, President Coolidge cracked up and started laughing. How dare this Will Rogers not know the name of the President of the US?" They became friends and had a delightful meeting.

Quick with a comeback and even quicker with just the right thing to say, Jesus has the reputation of being one of the most eloquent speakers that has lived. Some of the most significant words Jesus spoke are found in the reading from John 14. Jesus is speaking with his disciples and says, "You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas one of the disciples responded, "Lord we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

The words Jesus then states, are absolute in nature; they are complete in themselves and maybe this is why they are so powerful and so controversial even today. Jesus answered, "I am the way the truth and the life." Jesus did not say, "I am one of the ways; not does he say, I am one of the truths or even I am a life among many others." I am THE way, The Truth and THE life." But why does he say this and how important is this statement of who he is our understanding of faith today?

Jesus is tying up many things before he will be denied, arrested, tried and killed. He is teaching his disciples and helping them to prepare for the time when he will be returning to God—the Father. He tells them that everything will be all right. All they need to do is trust in God and to trust him. He then tells them about God's house where he will be going to and that there is a place for everyone. They should know the way to the place where he is going. Thomas is not understanding what is happening with Jesus. He says, But Jesus, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?

Jesus knows that his earthly ministry will soon end. He will die upon a cross soon and he is trying to teach these people so close to him about who he is and what his life and work has been about. Jesus has told Peter that he would deny him and Peter doesn't believe that this will happen. Jesus then tells the disciples who he is—in relationship with God—the Father. He is the Son of God but they are still unsure. They don't get the relationship of God—in heaven and God as an earthly man who would soon die. They don't understand these words—so clear and precise—Way, Truth and Life. But then often we don't either.

What does it mean that Jesus is THE way God the Father? In our world we know that there is religious diversity so what does it mean to say that Jesus is the Way? A simple answer would be that we need to look at the life, teachings and events surrounding the person of Jesus as a man who lived on earth to discover how God acts in the world. Jesus came to earth as an infant, a human being (we call this his incarnation) because God loved the world. Jesus' purpose was to save the people from their sins because sin had been in the world almost from the beginning. Jesus was present with God in the beginning and was sent by the Father to tell us about God and to demonstrate how God wants his human creation to live. God wants us to live in love. Jesus "way of living" is living in love and for love. What does this way of living in love mean? It is shaped by the particular way in which God loves in and through Jesus Christ. The way of Jesus means our acknowledgement that Jesus has shown us who God is and how we are to act in the world. All roads do not lead to God. Jesus way is of humility and self-denial for the sake of others. If we deny the unique nature of Jesus and what his death and resurrection has done in redeeming us, we are not clear of His Way for our life. And we are not sure of Him as the Way.

Jesus also said, "I am the Truth." In a world filled with competing truth claims as well as people who doubt what it is. Truth is not found in abstract notions or theories, but in Jesus, the

unique Son of God and the living embodiment of truth. From this perspective, truth depends on being in proper relationship to this one person who is divine truth. Jesus is different from all other prophets, witnesses and messengers from God. Jesus is all of these things yet more. Along with the Father and the Spirit, Jesus himself is God. Today's world causes us to wonder about how true is Jesus as the truth. People have differing ideas about Jesus and his relationship with God the Father but as we read in John 14, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me. "Jesus and God the Father are one. No one else claimed this or can claim this.

As Christians we believe in Jesus the Risen Christ. The One who died and is alive. The One whom people have been witnessing to and experiencing in their lives for over 2000 years. And the truth of this is that Jesus still touches the hearts of many because He and the Father are one and the Spirit of God which promised (and we will talk about next week) is what we experience now.

Jesus then said, I am the Life. The fullness of Life in Jesus is found in proper relationship to the Father through the person of Jesus. What is this fullness of Life? How can we understand it? How can we live it? When we welcome others into this church family we are inviting them not only to get to us as people, we are inviting them into a relationship with God. This relationship is concrete and filled with love from God through his people and shared back and forth. When Jesus said, I am the Life—he meant that we are to not just participate as an individual inhabiting earth for a set number of years and days, but to fully live like we are called by sharing with his people. This fellowship experienced here and now is in the life of the church which exists in anticipation of the climax of God's work of new creation. To be a Christian means to participate in Life, that is, in Jesus Christ as he participated in the life of the triune God.

As United Church members we believe and confess that Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man who offered Himself as a perfect Sacrifice on the Cross. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where he ever intercedes for us. (Article 7 of the 20 Articles of Doctrine) Jesus is the way, truth and life. How profound was Jesus statement to the disciples? How important it is to us! Do you believe that Jesus is the way, truth and life so that we might live eternally with him? Do we understand what this means for us—when we are uncertain of where our hope is found? When the truth of Jesus teachings is given in the Bible and we are in

need of learning more from him? When life in Christ is made known to be eternal and we believe? How profound and amazing this statement is?

The way of Jesus is a way of living each day knowing that God is with you. The truth of this is that Jesus teaches all there is to know about living our earthly life in the sacred text we call the Bible and the life we receive is forever. If we profess our faith and believe. Wow... isn't great to be a part of the family of God—because we believe and have faith in God? Jesus said, “I am the Way, the truth and life.” We are his faithful people and we follow in love. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray

Holy God we believe in the family of faith you call the church for we have faith and professed our understanding of who you are and can be in our lives through the gift and hope given in Jesus. We praise you for Jesus has taught us how to live, how to understand His way, to grow in truth by reading the Bible and to live lives of peace and hope. Speak to us in these moments O God as we seek to understand the joy we have in knowing you. Thank you. In Jesus' name. Amen.