

Prayer of the Day:

O God, you form the minds of your faithful people into a single will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that among the many changes of this world, our hearts may ever yearn for the lasting joys of heaven; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. I am the way, the truth, and the life, says the Lord. Alleluia. (John 14:6)

Sermon Text:

I don't go anywhere I haven't been without first punching the address into Google Maps. When I was younger, we didn't go anywhere of distance without first mapping everything out with an Atlas. If we went hiking in the mountains, you didn't leave camp without a map of the area and a compass. Knowing where we are and where we are going is absolutely basic to us and our general comfort. In fact, being lost for many can be an utterly debilitating problem.

All of that said, our lesson today can be a bit of a maze. It's an impressive theological text highlighting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as Jesus speaks to Thomas and Philip about himself and the Father, the doctrine of the exclusivity of the Gospel, a terror to the unbeliever and a joy to the believer, as Jesus announces, "*No one can come to the Father except through me.*" Verse 12-14, usually included with these words even get into prayer and the beautiful comfort we have in knowing that we can ask Jesus for anything (in accordance with His name and will) and He will do it. There is even a little apologetical training in here as Jesus points to various proofs for the statements He makes. It is a lot to try to take in during one sermon. But when we map the route and see where Jesus is really going here, it all falls together for our comfort, our assurance, our confidence, as we seek to navigate this life and contemplate the one to come. So today it's not GPS or an Atlas, but something even more ancient than either of them that announces, A Way Unlike Any Other that leads to our salvation.

Jesus says, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.*" ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Before you can get anywhere, you need to know where you are. Perhaps that's what makes being lost so terrifying. If I don't know where I am east could be west and west could be east. North could be south and south could be north. I'm in trouble! It's one of the reasons if you are lost in the woods they will advise you to stop and stay put until help arrives or you are confident you have found your bearings again.

John 14:1–11

¹⁴ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. – NIV84

So where are we? For the disciples, they are in the upper room and Jesus is talking about his impending death. But it's deeper than that. He has said one of them will betray Him, another will disown Him, all will fall away from Him, scatter, and run for their very lives. They are weak. They are imperfect. They are sinful. They are lost! If that's the apostles, then what about us?

I like to scoff at Thomas, for missing the point of Jesus' Words or Philip for needing more in the presence of God Himself. But more often than not, I point at them so that no one will look at me. I don't want people to see my lostness either. The very first sentence however lays me bare. "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.*" How often isn't it exactly the opposite? I am troubled and why because I struggle to obey the First Commandment. I erect one idol after another that occupies more of me than my God and before I know it, I've lost sight of Him altogether. Consider the biggest idol of all, "Self". Isn't that what the fear of lostness really is whether it be physical, psychological, or spiritual? I lose control. I don't understand. I can't figure it out. I am having trouble. I don't like any of this. I can't fix any of this.

Perhaps that's the most frightening and needed thing about the Law of our God all at once. It reminds us just how lost we really are, yes, just how lost we are even without the devil and the sinful world around us pitching in. Truth is I struggle with trust because I struggle with me and more often than not trouble of heart and mind if not body and life results. Ah, but this is needed! Because only when I see my sin, can I crumble in repentance at the foot of the cross. Only when I see the full extent of my lostness can I see the unfathomable love of a God who saves.

Notice this here too. In our lostness, Jesus comes to us. That's when all the comments come together for our comfort and our good. Jesus is the one who prepares places for us, Jesus is coming back to take us to be with Him, Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. Because of His work and the work of our Triune God we sinners, made saints in His blood spilled on the cross and connected to Him by faith, given and strengthened through His means, can approach not only Jesus but all three persons of our Holy Trinity with confidence, a confidence found not in self but in Him, in a perfect, unchanging God. So we pray, we repent, we trust in Christ as the only way to heaven not because we are trying to be exclusive but because it is the only way the works. A way completely outside of ourselves, a way completed and confirmed through Christ.

I don't go anywhere new unless I first plug the address into Google Maps. I don't want to get lost and end up wasting a lot of time because I thought I could get there on my own. But I'll admit a little frustration when it leads me in the wrong direction or ends up losing connection and recalculating. I felt the same way when I missed a turn on the map and had to refigure the route because of it. The same frustrations mount in this life because of my imperfection and sin, the imperfections and sins of others. Thanks be to God that when it comes to our salvation, none of that matters. I don't need to depend on others, on me, or even Google. I get to depend entirely on God, who loves me and gave Himself (on the cross) for me. He is a way unlike any other and because He is, I know one day the doubt, the fear, the trouble will vanish when He comes to take me, to take you, to be with Him in heaven. Amen.