

Sermon for Easter 5 Year A

The Text: John 14:1-14

A Place prepared

Clean sheets on the spare bed. check.

House clean and tidy. check.

Plenty of Food in the house. check

Yep ready for the visitors to arrive.

Is that something you do to prepare for visitors to come and stay with you? A special meal, the spare bed has clean fresh sheets, and the house is tidied?

It is special when children who have grown and left home, come home. For a mother, it is a joyous occasion when all the family are together and are at peace with one another.

Depending on where the children are geographically, there may be different ways they can travel to come home. Even when we go to places there is generally more than one way to take to reach a destination. If there is a more scenic way to get to a destination, sometimes that is a better way than to travel on a major highway.

Jesus tells about a place for us to go to today. He calls it his Father's house. It's a place where there is not just one spare room, but there are many rooms. But as Jesus says to Thomas, you can't get there on your own. Jesus says: "I am the way".

To know Jesus is to know the Father. In the same way, the Father knows the ones who listen to the voice of Jesus, and follow him along the way. It's interesting that before early believers were called Christians they were called people who followed 'The Way'.

Jesus fulfilled what the prophet Isaiah spoke of, "And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray". (Isaiah 35:8).

How are we ever able to walk the way of holiness and be invited into our heavenly room that is prepared for us? For we know that daily we struggle with our humanity and its sinful desires. Rather than daily concentrate on the Holy life God desires of us, we follow our own ambitions.

The way to God was completely closed, and sin was the roadblock. It was like when the Israelites had been rescued out of Egypt they were filled with fear because they thought the way to freedom was blocked by the Red Sea as the Egyptian chariots

were closing in behind them. It's the same in our lives. If we think our way to freedom depends on us, then we fail to trust that Jesus has provided away for our freedom.

The way was blocked because of sin, but God wanted to rescue us from this world in which sin entered and blocked the way to the place where our Heavenly Father has these many rooms prepared. God could not simply excuse or overlook our sin and allow us to enter his place in our sinful state. Yes God is merciful, but He is also just. Justice requires that sin be paid for. At great cost, he himself paid that price.

God offers salvation to everyone who accepts it through faith in Jesus. Jesus describes this way as entering through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Perhaps the way through Jesus doesn't look appealing enough or has too many restrictions. But in reality, the way through Jesus is bigger than you think, because God sent Jesus to save the world. It isn't God's fault that many don't accept that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

We know the way to heaven by trusting in what Jesus has done for us and what he continues to do for us through his gifts to the Church. Our journey begins in Baptism. Through God's Word and water Jesus dwells in our hearts through faith. Faith receives the promises of God and clings to Jesus as the true and only way. Faith receives Jesus as the way and rejects all other ways that are contrary to what God's word says.

Just like a mother, God has a lot of love to give, even lots more. God's love is an everlasting steadfast love that endures rejection, as he sees people go on a journey in other directions to fulfil their needs. However, through the Holy Spirit, God never stops trying to alert us if we go in the wrong direction.

It's like when your TomTom or Navman tells you perform a U-turn where possible. What I really dislike about relying on GPS is when they try to take you down a road that isn't there. It makes us end up feeling lost and not sure where I am. Then I need to back track to get on the right way.

Likewise, God gives us a conscience to alert us when we follow a way that leads away from his way. His ways are written on our hearts, and supported through his written word to show us his way.

When it comes to walking the way of holiness, it's the way of repentance and forgiveness. Repentance because we fail to live holy lives and need to turn back and confess our failures to God. God hears our cries for mercy and forgives us for Jesus' sake.

He is always waiting like a mother for her children to come home. One of the best images we have of this in the bible is the story of the prodigal son.

When Jesus says, "I am the Way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me" he is not meaning this to be a threat. Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, as a word of comfort.

They are a comfort for us as well, for we don't need to panic and search for a hidden map or look for clues, or guess if we are on the road to salvation. It's clear and simple.

As Jesus says "Do not let your heart be troubled. There are many rooms in my Father's house. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going away to make a place for you. After I go and make a place for you, I will come back and take you with me. Then you may be where I am."

A mother's desire is to protect her children. Have you felt the anxious wait to see your children safely arrive home? You hope they will not get lost, but will follow the way that leads to you, to the place you have prepared for them. Sometimes things occur where as parents, as a mother, you need to go and bring your child to the safety of home.

This is what Jesus did for all of us. He came down from heaven into the world, where we were lost and heading in all sorts of directions and he shows the way home. His desire is for us to be where he is. There is no other way than the way Jesus paved at a great cost to himself.

He calls us to follow him with hearts that forgive, and have compassion. With hearts that welcome home into the family a child who had lost their way. With hearts that even go looking when we notice we haven't seen them for a while.

It's what a mother does for her child so she knows her child is safe.

It's what Jesus does for us. There is only one true way to eternal life. That is the way of Jesus. Amen