

# Fifth Sunday of Easter

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## Introduction

Jesus tells us not to let our hearts be troubled, describes himself as 'the way, the life and the truth,' and reveals our place along a chain of greater connection.

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## Text

"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." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 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'? 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. 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. 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. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

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## Comment

Jesus strings a great deal together in these verses. One thing leads to another and then another. 'Believe in God, believe also in me.' Enter the house of God and you will find many more homes, dwelling places within dwelling places. To know Jesus is to know his Father; to be influenced by him is to engage in work that connects us to a heavenly source. What we latch onto here leads to further links – and allows us to connect to something far greater than we otherwise would.

What a fitting passage for this time of pandemic – when our global connectivity is on full display. Although we may not have seen it before, the chain of connection that Jesus describes is a place for rising conflict. What will we choose to connect to when we know that a point of contact not only makes ample resource available but also exposes us to further contagion?

As the world tries to make sense of a post-COVID world, conflicts are sure to come – shaped by the confused forces of globalisation and the virulent tendencies toward ethno-nationalism. Will COVID-19 pull us apart as we shrink back from the dangers of interconnectivity and as we look for others to blame, or will we see our interdependence as motivation for addressing common threats?

It is to these unsettling questions that Jesus' opening line offers renewed comfort: 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' Even if we wanted to, we would not be able to disconnect from a world criss-crossed with (mis)communication lines, constant traffic and viral vectors. Yet as Jesus is trying to remind us: this is not the only realm to which we belong. We also enjoy instant access to the dwelling place of God. To follow Jesus' line of thought: believe in his God and you assign divinity to acts of inclusion, forgiveness and grace, to self-giving love and incarnational peace. Believe in God and you believe in a Saviour who is the way, the life, and the truth – with us. Who is already with all of us in this journey, in this reality, in the living of these days.

That is to say that Christ is not the starting point to a distant destination, or the escape route to a safer enclave for ourselves; he is the connection point to all the strength and encouragement we could need in a world of growing interdependence and inevitable conflict.

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## Response

Our instant access to larger worlds makes points of contact all the more crucial. The gospel writers wanted their audience to hear that a connection with Christ made God's very self accessible. We, too, rejoice in that message – but are also aware in the context of earthly conflicts that choices of contact make a world of difference to our experience.

It may be time again to ask ourselves questions of how we connect with the world. What media do we consume, and do their views affect our perspective? What social and socioeconomic networks are we a part of without acknowledging? What voices and stories do we simply not hear because we are not tuned in to certain channels or not listening to 'irrelevant' discussions?

Thomas and Philip are standing right next to Jesus, yet fail to make the crucial point of connection. They want to know how to get to where Jesus is heading, even as Jesus tells them to pay attention to what is in front of them. They are unsatisfied with what they have, and ask for further still – not realising that everything they desire is available already.

Just as these disciples were urged to reconsider what they had access to, you and I are led to reassess how our available chains of connection create and reveal new worlds.

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## Prayer

God of the world we create,  
God of the world you reveal:  
may our way be not of escape,  
but of further connection.  
May our life be not for ourselves  
but for you and others still.  
May our truth be not  
what we shape it to be.  
Instead may we accept  
the stranger and more glorious truth  
of what already is:  
a greater world available  
through your divine and selfless love.  
Amen.