

May 3, 2026
The Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A
Trinity, St. Louis
The Rev. Dr. Paul Jacobson, *Rector*

Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-1

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

To help us think about what resurrection might mean to us in our own time, today's gospel reading takes us back in time. On the night of what we now call the Last Supper, Jesus is preparing the disciples for his death – and what would come after. He tells them that he is going to prepare a place for them, so that he might come and bring them there. Thomas and Philip give voice to the doubts we all have, “where?” “we don't know how to get there!” And, as if he came from Missouri, Philip says, “show me!”

It is precisely this anxiety, expressed in words of longing and protest, that rings true to us today. We live in a time of profound division and unknowingness, and we are desperate for answers. We spend our days consuming clickable news of some stripe or other. We scroll through our screens for hours on end. In our hearts, we know that it's neither productive nor healthy – there's a reason it's called doom-scrolling. Nevertheless, we keep at it, because we're terrified that we will miss that one item that will tell us the thing need to know, that will give us THE answer.

Think back six years ago, during the height of the pandemic. In those days the constant questions were: How long will this last? Will I be safe? Will my loved ones be OK? The less we knew, the more we grasped at knowing.

I used to harbor a hope that, when Covid became more-or-less controlled, we could get back to normal. I was wrong. The shouting across the social and political divides of our common life has not subsided; it has only increased in volume and venom. And the same questions still plague us. How long will this last? Will I be safe? Will my loved ones be OK? The less we know, the more we grasp at knowing.

From Thomas and Philip in the Upper Room to you and I here this morning, these questions are products of isolation, confusion, sorrow, and desperation. The biblical term is lament, as in Psalm 13 which begins: *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever? How long will you hide your face from me?*

Jesus told his disciples, *do not let your hearts be troubled*, because their hearts were troubled. Our hearts are troubled, and with good reason. And there are days when it is hard not to hunker down in our troubled hearts.

But by allowing ourselves to lament, to acknowledge (and say out loud!) everything that is difficult to understand or endure, it becomes possible to make room in our hearts to hear a word from God as being genuine and true. In permitting ourselves to give voice to our uncertainty and pain, there is room within us to hear Jesus' response not simply as comfort, but as promise and hope.

This morning, we hear Jesus say, *in my Father's house there are many dwelling places*. I was raised with the Revised Standard Version, so I heard "many rooms." But the ever-present King James Version and the fact that I spent a lot of time in and around Forest Park as a child, made "many mansions" seem more attractive. To this Calvinist child, a life of virtue would get you a bigger lot and a better architect.

But this misses the mark of John's Greek, which is more accurately conveyed by the assurances of the old spiritual that there's "plenty good room" in God's kingdom. The idea here is not a house with a title but a place to stay in the home of another, somewhere to rest and receive hospitality. There is a space for you, and a space for all, but in God's house, all of us remain guests.¹

What's more, God's promise of belonging extends far beyond the limits of our mortality. On that last night, in the shadow of his own cross, Jesus promises, *I go to prepare a place for you*. In these days of increasingly bitter divisions and public rancor, savor that promise for a moment. *I go to prepare a place for you*.

This is not a promise of nostalgic restoration, or of making anything great again. Rather, Jesus' promise points us in the other direction, *so that where I am, there you may be also*. This is the promise realized by Stephen in the first reading: You have a place with God. You have a home with God.

Long before Covid-19 required most of us to adjust our idea of home to include sweatpants, sourdough, and Zoom, home was one of the most powerful ideas in our culture. Our language is littered with such images:

Home is where the heart is
Hearth and home
Home-made
"ET, phone home"

And none of us can forget that young girl from Kansas who taught us that "there's no place like home."

When I was four years old, my family lived in Evansville, IN. The house was in what we called "the country." We lived between two farms, so there was a lot of space, woods and fields, just ripe for exploration.

I am told that one of my favorite pastimes was to head out to the field all duded up with my cowboy hat and beaded cowboy belt. There, I would build a perfect TV

¹ Thanks to Andrew McGowan, *Love makes a place to stay*, April 28, 2026.

western “campfire” and then sit and sing “Home, Home on the Range” at the top of my lungs. Over and over. For hours.

Somewhat earlier, in the year 410 CE, the city of Rome had been sacked by the Gothic king Alaric, a portent of the eventual collapse of the city of Rome and the Roman Empire. In the midst of that rapidly changing world, Augustine of Hippo (in what is now Algeria), gave voice to the longing that is in each one of us ... to know where we will end up. We, like Thomas and Philip, want to reach home; we want to know where it is and how to get there. Addressing God, Augustine wrote, “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”²

The promise that Jesus makes to his disciples, and to us, is not about where, or when, or even how we will get home...to God. Instead, Jesus makes a promise of who, the promise of himself. *Whoever has seen me has seen God.*

My friends, in these days of deep unknowingness, it’s tempting to grab hold of what sounds like certainty, whether politicians, or media influencers, or the next product delivered to your door that will change your life. To use the language of the Epistle, none of these can serve as the cornerstone of our home in God. They are only idols; rocks over which we stumble; or in our fear and frustration, pick up and throw at others.

Jesus never said that faith makes things easier – or that things will turn out the way we want. Reading both the Bible and history makes such a conclusion silly. The difficult emotions of fear and confusion are real, and worth giving voice to.

But, they are not the only reality; the life of faith may not make things easier, but it does make life itself richer and deeper. Sometimes that means just hanging on by your fingernails. It can also mean flourishing even in the most challenging of times. And so, when lament is in your heart, *How long, O Lord, remember the words of Jesus, let not your hearts be troubled.*

Remember also the promise of Jesus, the promise of himself, as Way, Truth, and Life. Invite him into your heart and allow him to build you into that spiritual house *in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9). This is what resurrection means to us in the here and now, this is a reason to keep on feasting.

On Wednesday, I wrote about a poem of invitation and welcome to the Risen Christ, written by the 17th century priest and poet George Herbert. [8 – if you want to follow along, it’s on p. 12] {10:30 – if you want to follow along, it’s on p. 17, and we will sing it at the end of Holy Communion.}

²*Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.* Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Confessions, I;1.

The Call³

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
Such a Life, as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
Such a Light, as shows a feast:
Such a Feast, as mends in length:
Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a Joy, as none can move:
Such a Love, as none can part:
Such a Heart, as joyes in love.

As a way of practicing resurrection, I suggested spending some time with this poem. Invite Christ into your heart as Way, Truth and Life, as Light, Feast and Strength, and as Joy, Love and Heart. Then, perhaps you can allow yourself to believe more deeply in a "Life that killeth death." Quite the opposite of the world we now call home, isn't it?

I realize that memorizing nine words in a hurry can be a heavy lift, so here's a shorter-term suggestion. As you come to receive Jesus in the sacrament, invite Jesus to come into the home of your heart, repeating to yourself just that first line, "Come, my way, my truth, my life."

My dear and precious friends in the Risen Christ, do not let your hearts be troubled. We've not been down this particular tumultuous road before; but neither do we travel it alone. Jesus has already traveled it and walks with us now. Jesus is the living stone that is way, truth, and life, the one who leads us to abundant life in and through his God and ours.

Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.

³ From *The Temple* (1633) by George Herbert (1593-1633).