

The Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A, 2008

The Rev. Ronald N. Johnson

In the Gospel this morning, we heard these words, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” This is an exclusive statement that troubles some. Most of us value inclusiveness, and try to set aside the prejudice and sense of entitlement that can be so divisive.

When people ask me how Christians can say that Jesus is the one way to the Father, my answer is that Jesus is the only way that I know. From what I’ve read, from what I’ve studied, from what I’ve learned from a lifetime of experiences, Jesus is my way, and my truth and my life. His followers, during his earthly ministry, his disciples, saw God the Father in Jesus Christ. He was God’s perfect revelation. John the Evangelist conveyed that when he recorded these words, also from today’s Gospel reading, “I am in the Father,” Jesus said, “and the Father is in me.” To put this in a nutshell, Jesus brings us into the presence of God. He is the portal of salvation. As believers, we know God in Jesus Christ. The revelation is perfect, only our ability to comprehend, largely through imperfect faith, keeps us from perfect knowledge.

In the Gospel today, we are assured of God’s love and our place in God’s family. We also discover that God has a plan for us in his Kingdom on earth, and what is that kingdom? It is the Church of Christ, the family of believers, a community of the faithful that transcends borders, races, genders – all artificial and porous boundaries for those sharing faith in Jesus Christ. The knowledge and love of Christ sets these boundaries aside, so that we are truly family, we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.

The Epistle reading this morning, From First Peter, places great emphasis on this sense of Christian community as family. Peter tells us that we are God’s own people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. All this comes from faith in Jesus Christ. But all of this also comes with an expectation. Saint Peter said being God’s people carries with the status the responsibility of knowing Christ and making him known. Peter said that God makes us his chosen people, his family “in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The Gospel promises that we can proclaim the mighty acts, we can do the work of being Christ to our neighbor, because Jesus stands behind us and beside us, empowering, enabling and encouraging.

Faith in Jesus encourages us to be proactive in spreading the good news of Easter - the Lord has risen, the Lord is in this world today, making God the Father known. We, who are baptized into his death and resurrection, are the instruments of that revelation, we make God known to those that have not found him when we let Jesus live in us. By our love of God and neighbor, by following, with courage our Lord’s New Commandment, given the night of his Last Supper, that

we love others as he loves us, we reveal Jesus as the way, and the truth, and the life, so that others will come to the Father through him. *Amen.*

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