

Do Not Let..... The Way Truth and Fullness

Texts: Acts 7:55-60

1 Peter 2:2-10 (Series A. 5 Sunday of Easter) Ps.31:1-5,15-16

John 14:1-14

Prayer: ***Seeing and living life in a God-centered context***

One of the reasons Christians gather together each week for celebration is to remember the *Resurrection Event*: to look back on this incredible thing that happened to Jesus of Nazareth and to realize that it is a continuing experience in the life of the Christian Community; to realize that God's Resurrection Power is experienced in our own death as well as in the death of Jesus. We are all going to die, every one of us. We are moving toward death with each passing moment. The people we love are going to die.

One of the most unfortunate things about modern civilization is the unwillingness to face this honestly and openly. We say, "*Let's change the subject; it's too morbid.*"

We don't want to talk about it. We try to hide it. We try to repress it. But try as we may, it continues on a subconscious level, to tear us apart. Lately, however, a new willingness to confront the fact of death has begun to emerge.

For example, when New York University listed a new course entitled, "*The Meaning of Death*," 220 students were accepted. Several hundred more were turned away because the classroom couldn't hold them. Surprised school authorities interviewed many of these students to find the reason for the course's popularity.

One student summed up the prevailing mood in these words: "We feel it is time to come to terms with the meaning of death." That is something the Gospel is telling us. Week in and week out we are reminded that facing squarely the fact of our own death and the death of the people we love is part of our Christian life style.

At this very moment, each of us is dying, partially. But the God who created us is creating a Resurrection body for us. We will move into the next life in this Resurrection body, and death will be transformed into life, sickness into wholeness of life, despair into joy. This is what Resurrection means in terms of our own death.

Thomas Wolfe, one of America's greatest writers, expresses this very beautifully in his novel, "You Can't Go Home Again." He says, something has spoken in the night and told me I shall die, saying:

"To lose the earth you know for greater knowing; to lose the life you have for greater living; to lose the friends you love for greater loving; to find a land more kind than a home, more large than earth; toward which the conscience of the world is tending."

But that's only part of the story. God's Resurrection Power works not only in and through our final death but also through our daily deaths. Every day there is a process of death and resurrection going on. We are all going through all kinds of little daily deaths and, in them, the Resurrection Power of God is working to give us new life: greater freedom, greater joy, deeper hope.

Husbands and wives know that marriages go through periods of death; that certain things in marriage are outgrown and left behind and are no longer useful; that a new kind of relationship comes into being within the marriage, a new understanding between husband and wife. But the process often is painful.

Moving from death to resurrection can be very hard on the people involved. But, whether the situation calls for the resurrection of a good relationship or the dissolution of a destructive one, God's Resurrection Power is always working in such circumstances and the healing will come whenever we allow ourselves to experience this Presence.

Jesus expresses this beautifully, but on a far deeper level, in today's Gospel Lesson: *"it is the Father who lives in Me accomplishing His works ... Have faith in Me."*

Jesus is talking about a whole way of life here, about seeing life, and living life in a God-centered context. Whatever you do, the power to do it comes from God. Whatever happens to you, bad as it may seem at times, does not happen outside the scope of God's concern. What a joy it can be to be able to say with conviction, "The Father lives in me accomplishing His works ... the Father loves me, right now he loves me.

Jesus says to his disciples and to us, *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God...and trust in Me... I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in Me will perform the same works as I do Myself (Jn. 14:1,12)*. The most important decision you will ever make is your decision about belief and trust in the Loving God who made you and wants you for his own.

By coming here to participate in this act of community worship, you already have taken an outward step. That is why you are here. You want to outwardly express belief and trust in the Holy God.

That is part of what worship is all about. But have you taken this outward step without first having taken the necessary inward step: the discovery of God's Loving Presence within you? A Gracious God is deep within you at this very moment -- wanting to get through to you, wanting to evoke a response from you that says, "*Jesus is absolutely right!*" I must believe! I must trust!

Truth: As Experiential / personal knowledge or Intellectual knowledge:
The Hebrew understanding of Truth is ***personal experience***. Let me give you this analogy if I may, the difference between intellectual and personal knowledge: I have been married for 38 years. Supposed, before I met my wife, I went to a book store and on the shelf was this book entitled ***Susan the amazing woman***.

Chapter one: Her great intelligence.

Chapter two: Her sparkling personality.

Chapter three: Her great patience, and forgiving spirit.

Chapter four: Her potential to be a long suffering wife.

Chapter five: Her sporting ability, rather a, short chapter

Chapter six: Her cooking ability.

Waah! she sounds an amazing person, that is *intellectual knowledge*. Now I can say to you, she is an amazing person. *Personal knowledge*. Experiencing Jesus, is having a relationship with him which grows over the years.

"Whoever believes in *Me will perform the works that I do*," Jesus says to His disciples in today's Lesson. In other words, "If you really believe in Me, you will trust in Me. If you really believe in Me, you will entrust your life to Me. If you really believe in Me, you will do whatever I tell you to do with your life -- you will perform the works that I Myself perform."

As mature Christians, we must be willing to acknowledge that God's Will is absolutely right for us. For example, Jesus reveals the Father's Will for your life and mine in terms of mercy and forgiveness. Peter the Apostle asked Jesus, "Lord when my brother wrongs me, how often must I forgive Him? Seven times?" "No," Jesus answered, "not seven times; I say, seventy times seven times" (Mt. 18:21-22).

This is Jesus' way of saying that no limit whatever is placed on our need to practice mercy and forgiveness. The Kingdom of God, Jesus explained to Peter, is built on a foundation of endless mercy and forgiveness -- a foundation of limitless love. Why has God ordained that our fulfillment as human persons depend upon the depth of our love for one another?

Why has God ordained that our peace of mind and soul -- our happiness -- depends upon our willingness to love, even our enemies? Who can give an answer? Who can claim to fully understand the process of love? Only God, of course, for God is Love. Our knowledge of God is a mere human glimpse.

No one can know God fully. No one can understand the process of mercy and forgiveness and love fully. It all comes down to a matter of trust. God is asking us to trust Him.

God is asking us for complete trust, a "no-questions-asked" kind of trust. God is good. St. Athanasius of Alexandria said: *He became what we are so that He might make us what He is*. God is asking us for complete trust.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote...

He walked by faith and not by sight,

By love and not by law;

The presence of the wrong or right

He rather felt than saw. Trust God!

Trust in the miraculous power of His Love.

Trust in His Will for you to embrace and cherish life in Christ.

In other words, Love one another!

Let us pray:

God, our Creator ~ God, our Redeemer ~ God, our Sanctifier

Dear GodYou, three in one, are simply yet complexly God. It is to each, all, and only you that I pray at this moment. My head cannot understand or define you in your three-in-one-ness, but if I could, then you could not be you.

Let me not be too concerned with the depth and breadth of all the philosophical and theological stuff that others much smarter than me, like your servants Athanasius, Luther, Calvin and others have argued over. Just help me to remember, that each day in my life, all I only need is you to walk with me on the *Way. Amen.*

