

“In My Father’s House”

John 14: 1-14

There is something about that moment when one chapter in your life ends and another begins. It is a scary moment. It is an emotional moment. It is a deeply personal moment. Whether that moment comes when you are leaving one career to start another, or maybe retiring after 20 odd years at a job. This moment could come as you watch your youngest child go off to college or this moment could come as you watch your loved one being taken away by the hands of death.

What do we do when that moment happens? There are all types of responses when that moment comes. Some try to stop time by wishing for the clock hands to stop. Some try to impart knowledge to those left behind or words of wisdom for those who are starting out on a new adventure. Some want to remember that moment and never forget it. Some struggle with this moment because they want to say all that they have wanted to say or needed to say to their loved ones and they try to fit it all in to that one moment of time. Some are so frightened by this moment and the imposing change that this moment will bring that they try to ignore it or maybe they act like that moment never happened.

Regardless of how we act or experience or even embrace these moments, they happen in all of our lives. That one moment before the clock starts up again, that one moment before time marches on and the new chapter of your life begins. Our Scripture today is that moment for Jesus, that moment before the guards come, that moment before he is betrayed, that moment before his life changes, that moment before the world changes. Our Scripture is the story of that moment for Jesus.

So Jesus responds to that moment by gathering his disciples together and chooses to share some knowledge, some wisdom, some insight , maybe even words of hope and comfort for his friends, for his followers, for this disciples. In this Scripture, we as believers some two thousand years later get to experience and to be a part of that moment in time for Jesus before all things would change and would end.

This moment is a personal, private moment between Teacher, and students, between Master and follower, between beloved friends. Jesus doesn't turn to John and say, "John, I need you to make sure that you get all this down. Word for Word. I'm going to give you some instructions about the days ahead."

It didn't happen like that. Jesus looked around at his disciples. And he knows-that the moment had finally come when one story would end and another

would begin. The moment had finally come when the end of Jesus' time on earth was drawing to a close and the disciples would be afraid, would be forsaken, and would scatter.

So what does Jesus do in this moment? He shares stories with them. He lovingly washes their feet. He gives them words of comfort. He gives them words of instruction. He encourages them. He promises that they would be together again.

And they don't understand. Jesus, where are you going? Jesus, we don't know the way. Jesus, we are confused. So Jesus tries again. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also.

And they still don't understand. "Jesus, show us the Father and we will be fine. You don't need to worry about us. We will know all the answers to all the questions as soon as you show us the Father."

Jesus feels the hot breath of Time on his neck. He knows that the minutes, the seconds are slipping away. And the disciples just don't understand.

So Jesus tries again: "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and in fact will do them better than me. Just trust in the Word of God. Just trust and believe in me."

The hands of the clock start ticking away again and the moment passes. And we know what follows this story: Jesus is betrayed and crucified. The disciples scattered. We know that things look dark and difficult for this small band of fisherman turned followers. We know that it seems like all hope is lost.

Until the disciples think back to Jesus' words and they remember. They allow the powerful tool of memory to shape them, to form them, to encourage them, to strengthen them. They remember Jesus' last words to them in that moment, that moment before all things changed. They remember and reflect on Jesus' last words to them now through the lens of the resurrection. They see them now with eyes that have seen the Risen Lord. They heard them now with ears that have heard the good news that the Light of God will never die away. They experience these last words now with hearts that have opened up to the blessings of new life that they have experienced through the resurrection.

it is through the lens of the resurrection that Jesus' last words to his disciples make sense. And the disciples remember what Jesus said to them and they realize that a new chapter in their lives is beginning and Jesus had given them the words of comfort and hope to continue the journey even before he left them that night in the upper room, reminding them that he would not leave them alone, that he would not abandon them.

These words of hope, words of comfort, words of strength were things that Jesus had already asked them to do before he left: To follow Jesus' teachings in their lives, to share Jesus' teachings with others. To follow Jesus' example: to follow Jesus, the Way, the Truth and life. To share the good news that the darkness will not overtake the light.

These words that Jesus left them with seem so simple, seem so easy to do as followers of Jesus. They are exactly the work that Jesus taught them along the way. They are exactly the missions that Jesus did while he was preaching and teaching. They are exactly the tasks that Jesus modeled for them as his followers, tasks that Jesus showed them how to do while he was here, tasks that they saw Jesus doing already during his time here on earth.

Tasks they knew how to do already! But now the fear was gone. The fear had left them, the fear that held them back and kept them in their comfort zones had disappeared. And all that was left was new life and the call to go out and share the good news.

Now this new beginning for the disciples was just a matter of letting go of the fear, of stepping out in faith, and trusting that God would guide them on their journeys.

And today we find ourselves in a similar moment in time: we are wondering, wondering about this whole Surfing the Edge process, wondering if it is right for us, wondering about the future of Midway Christian Church, wondering about the world that we live in where the only constant is that everything changes. Even as we sit here gathered together as a disciples, we are wondering how we will be able to continue to live a faithful life in a world that is so filled with darkness and hurt?

The good news is for us and for all of God's creation is that we are called to remember Jesus' words once more and realize that we are not alone. God is guiding us. God is leading us. God is in control. God has laid out before us tasks and missions that we already know how to do because Jesus has already shown us how to live them out in our lives when he first welcomed us, when he first embraced us as a friend, when he first listened to our stories, when he first saw us for who we really are, when he saw us as a child of God, not labels this world had placed upon us

Today we are called to remember Jesus' words to us: "Believe in me. Believe in God." Today we are called to remember Jesus' words once more: "I am the Way, the Truth, and Life." Today we are called to remember Jesus' promises to us as people of faith: "You are going to do great things as my disciples."

Today we are called to continue the journey that is laid out before us, filled with hope, encouraged and inspired because through Jesus Christ, we have experienced the compassion and the unconditional love of God. Because Through Jesus Christ, we have been given the reassurance of God's everlasting presence. Because Through Jesus Christ, we have received the grace, and love of God which will be "the road map [for our] continuing journey of faith.

We can continue the journey ahead, regardless of obstacles, regardless of our fears, regardless of anything that may try to hold us back Because we know in our hearts that because of the example and the model of Jesus Christ, "we can trust in the God of compassion. We know that there is a place for us and we know that the meaning of life is to share that compassion in the world."

The good news for us is that John recognized that these words that Jesus shared with only a select few needed to be heard and that this words of Jesus would resonate with the believing community that was left behind to continue Jesus' ministry. Two thousand years ago, these words held power, mercy and grace. And today these words have not lost their power, their comfort and their hope. We are a believing community who is struggling to live in a very confusing and very dark world. And today we need hear these words once more so that we

are comforted and given hope, so that we are inspired and encouraged, so that we hold to the promise of God's Coming Kingdom.

Today We are given these words to strengthen us for the continuing journey. WE are given these words to energize us to go out into this community as the hands of God, working to bring about the Kingdom of God. WE are given these words so that we can be encouraged and inspired to be Jesus' disciples. We are given these words as a reminder today and always that God is with us. We are given these words so that we have the strength to step out in faith and to let go of our fears that are holding us back from becoming the person and the people that God created us to be.

We are given these words of hope so that we have the courage to do the tasks that God has laid out before us as the people of God.

May we continue the journey, following the Way, the Truth and Life, knowing that God is guiding us and that God is in control. Amen.