



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

April 20, 2008

Easter 5A

By Reverend Donna Barr

Thomas said to him: “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How do we know the way?” Jesus said to him: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” In the Gospel of John, Jesus again and again tells his disciples who he really is and where he was going. They were either in denial or they just didn’t get it!

I know the feeling quite well! I often times do not understand, and certainly do not know the way! Sometimes it seems too hard. Like Thomas, I too, need to ask the questions and search out the answers. I began this week, to look further into the Gospel of John and discovered that this “I am” statement from Jesus was just one of seven times he tried to tell his followers who he was. Seven times in seven different ways Jesus explains himself, beginning with “I am.” I had to laugh at myself as I studied the scripture realizing that no matter how hard this task, and no matter what I could or could not understand, I could not run away. Jesus would find a way to bring me to himself. He would continue to pursue me even when I did not understand his metaphors or his parables. He was a patient teacher to his disciples and he is a patient teacher to me. He never stops telling us where to make our true home, what to look for, and how to live. And so in my own words and in my quest for this message here is what I found:

John 6 “I am the bread of life.” I am a daily offering. I nourish and sustain you with the nutrients that give you energy for life.

John 8 “I am the light of the world.” I illumine your path and give you sight so that you will find your way. I am your hope in a world of darkness.

John 10 “I am the sheep gate.” I am an entrance into the kingdom. You may choose to stand outside but it will always open if you will come to me.

John 10 “I am the good shepherd” I will be your guide and protector. And when you are lost I will seek you out and care for you.

John 11 “I am the resurrection and the life.” I am the source for eternal life. The true reality by which you live.

John 14 “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” I am the honest and authentic path. The journey that is true and spirit filled.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Established in 1847*

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 [info@stjohnsky.com](mailto:info@stjohnsky.com) [www.stjohnsky.com](http://www.stjohnsky.com)



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John 15 "I am the true vine. I am your center and your heart. The place where you will gain strength and find peace.

In summary of these seven statements, Jesus' mission is the source of eternal life (the vine, life, resurrection). He is the means through whom we find life (the way, gate). He leads us to life (shepherd). He reveals to us the (truth). And he nourishes our life with (bread). I listened as closely as I could to these words of Jesus and then turned back to the beginning of John to reread again, "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth...For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus." His words are compelling. They offer perspective, insight, understanding and vision. They bring consolation, comfort, encouragement and hope. They take away fear, isolation, shame and guilt. His words can reconcile, unite, forgive and heal. In short his words are truth and love. The last words written in the Gospel of John has this to say about truth: the truth which liberates is the power of love, for God is love. Only when our words become flesh in our own lives and the lives of others, can we change the world. Jesus is the word made flesh. In him speaking and acting are one and the same. So in my search and in my questions I found the truth in Christ himself. The beginning and the end of John's gospel and everywhere in between....Jesus is the way, the truth and the life!

I heard a story about a teenager, who after Jesus first became truth to him, sneaked into his high school classroom before the start of the day and printed on the chalkboard in huge letters: JESUS CHRIST IS THE ANSWER! When he returned later, he discovered that someone else had printed under his statement: YEAH, BUT WHAT IS THE QUESTION? As his life progressed he found that there isn't only one question. Life asks how much we can love, enjoy and endure. Life asks us to distinguish between what is really important and what is unimportant. Life asks us to exercise the judgment of conscience. But perhaps the most profound question asked by life is the question of significance and meaning. This man is old now and tells that he now knows much more about the many questions which life asks. Life has questioned him about his values and priorities, about his visions and his dreams, about his courage and capacity to love. "But" he says "to all the questions that life asks: JESUS CHRIST IS STILL THE ANSWER!"

Like the disciples, we must take a serious look at the Truth of Christ. Henri Nouwen puts it like this. "Life is unpredictable. We can be happy one day and sad the next, rich one day and poor the next, alive one day and dead the next. So who is there to hold on to? Who is there to trust at all times? Only Jesus, the Christ....."

Remember when Jesus says he has come to bear witness to the truth and Pilate asks "What is the truth?" Jesus doesn't answer Pilate's question. He just stands there. Stands and stands, there. If we listen carefully we might hear him say - "I am."

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Amen

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