

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Please read John 14 1 -14 and think on it by yourself for a few minutes.

Often Christians are encouraged to think of their lives as a journey. Have any of you ever thought about your Christian life in that way? Are we ready for the journey God has laid out before us? As a church we now know that we will not be able to go back to where we were, and we certainly will not meet before 21st June at the earliest now that the Welsh Assembly has extended lockdown for another three weeks

The reading from John 14 is one which is very familiar often being used at funerals. It's a passage that we use to draw hope for ourselves as we suffer the distress that losing a loved one brings. But in a way we have damaged that text by placing it in a funeral context because I think it has more to say to us.

The passage starts – “Do not let your hearts be troubled” – a friend of mine Paula Gooder translates that verse as “Do not let your hearts be in turmoil”. In other words don't let yourself feel shaken up. Something we need to hear and own in present times.

Almost ten years ago a lorry went into the back of my car – when I got home, I was in a bit of a state indeed Sandra said to someone who rang – he's very shaken up. I was. Even though I was physically fine with no injuries the event had shaken me up.

Why? After all rationally I was Ok in one piece – no damage – but my mind was in turmoil thinking what might have happened. I could remember getting out of the car and looking up at this lorry towering above me.

And those words from John 14 were spoken into the situation – don't let yourself be shaken by the events around you – stay focussed on God. In the moment of the accident I lost my compass bearing.

In this passage Jesus says to us you have a choice you can be shaken around, or you can trust in God and trust in me Jesus. There is a big difference between being shaken around and trusting in God.

Thomas in this passage throws a bit of a wobbly he's confused as to what's going on in his life and what the next step will be for him and for Jesus and so he says to Jesus – I don't get it I don't know the way forward. Isn't that often the case for us- if we are honest, we don't know what the next step forward is or the step after that. Of course, that makes us feel uncomfortable because we want to map everything out in great detail, but God doesn't work like that he doesn't tell us everything instead he gives us a compass.

A compass rather than a map ...so with the compass we know the direction we are going in but we have no idea what the terrain looks like ahead of us. In essences that's the reply Jesus gives to Thomas when he says “I am the way”

In those words, I am the way – no detail is given of what it will mean to follow him but the challenge to Thomas is clear. Thomas I am the way will you follow me? It's a defining

moment for Thomas he's been hanging around with Jesus and he's quite liked what he's seen but he's still confused.

Should he follow Jesus and what will it mean if he does? Remember at this point the disciples had no idea what it would cost them – they didn't know of the events leading up to Easter they had no past history to look back on. And Jesus says Thomas follow me I am the way.

And Thomas makes his choice to follow Jesus knowing he will always be on safe ground if he trusts Jesus but also knowing there won't be a clear map for the journey ahead it will be one step at a time. But Jesus will go with him. Are we prepared to step out and follow Jesus and all he offers to us without knowing where it will take us?

It seems to me that this is the first step if we are going to journey with God. Are we ready to trust him?

He will not let us down.

Isaiah 30 v21 says this

“And when you turn to the right, or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, this is the way; walk in it.” That verse offers tremendous comfort that we can step out in faith and trust God

Because our destination is clear it is that we meet God and that we are ourselves heading for the Kingdom of God. Isn't that great to know – our journey with Christ takes us towards our God.