

## **Willow River Parish—Clear Lake, Deer Park, Forest United Methodist**

### **John 14:1-14**

“Don’t be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. My Father’s house has room to spare. If that weren’t the case, would I have told you that I’m going to prepare a place for you? When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me so that where I am you will be too. You know the way to the place I’m going.”

Thomas asked, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us.”

Jesus replied, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don’t speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does His works. Trust me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on account of the works themselves. I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father can be glorified in the Son. When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.”

## 1. Say What?

Good morning to all mother's on this Mother's Day. I feel that we need a bit of humor, so I have a list of nine things a Mother would never say. Mother's, see if you have ever said any of these.

1. "How on earth can you see the TV sitting so far back?"
2. "Yeah, I used to skip school a lot, too."
3. "Just leave all the lights on...it makes the house look more cheery."
4. "Let me smell that shirt. Yeah, it's good for another week."
5. "Go ahead and keep that stray dog, honey. I'll be glad to feed and walk him every day."
6. "Well, if Timmy's Mom says it's OK, that's good enough for me."
7. "The curfew is just a general time to shoot for. It's not like I'm running a prison around here."
8. "I don't have a tissue with me...just use your sleeve."
9. "Don't bother wearing a jacket—the wind-chill is bound to improve."

Well, someone has to make sure we all survive childhood. Usually that task fall to mom.

## 2. Space

Space is what keeps the world in balance. Everything, even molecules, have space between them. Space is what defines

matter. Without space, individual quantities of matter don't exist. Our sense of self, our individualism, our sense of community, our sense of reality, our sense of who we are in relationship to others, is all dependent on space.

You may notice, now that you've been in quarantine for about two and a half months, that you are either seeking more or less space, depending on your situation. Space defines our relationships. Too much of it, and we long to see the people we love. Too little, and we are ready to flee to the hills just for a moment's alone time. Space is something we take for granted in our lives and in our world. But space requires constant awareness, because space, in reality, is a relational dance that we do with each and every object—and person—in our lives. Depending upon which partner we engage with, the dance looks different.

Ever come across someone who just gets too close into your personal space—stands too closely to talk to you? If we were cognizant of that before, now we are more than ever aware of how close someone is to us, who is in our space, who has invaded our invisible boundaries. “Social distancing” has brought our awareness of personal space to a new high.

Love is a dance that sometimes requires distance, and sometimes requires close proximity. How well you can dance that dance will reveal how well that relationship can manage through changes and adversity.

### 3. Jesus' Vision

Jesus offers a vision of God's realm. He says, "Don't be troubled." He then invites us to trust God's provision of a house with rooms to spare. Yet Jesus' words don't quite pierce the disciples' doubt and confusion. Speaking for the disciples and perhaps also for us, Thomas says, "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" Jesus responds, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

For some Christians, Jesus' response has become a charter for Christian exclusivism, scuttling the "house with rooms to spare" message and substituting instead a simplistic declaration of belief as a litmus test for salvation. In this understanding, salvation often has little to do with life on this side of the grave.

In his book "Speaking Christian", Marcus Borg leads us into a deeper consideration of what Jesus meant. He writes, "Jesus incarnates, embodies, enfleshes, what can be seen of God in human life. To say 'Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life' is to say, 'What we see in Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.' It is not about knowing the word Jesus and believing in what is said about him that is "the way." Rather, the way is what we see in His life..." Borg's interpretation turns the emphasis toward what Jesus taught and how He lived as the ultimate expression of God's revolutionary love for all people. The risen One walks in the way of truth and life, and calls us to do the same.

#### **4. One Way Out**

The year was 1275 BC, Before Christ. The land was Egypt. The ruler was Pharaoh. The leader of the Jews was Moses. The Jews had been in slavery for four hundred years to the Egyptians, building their cities and pyramids. But God had sent the plagues, and now the Jewish nation was beginning their exodus from slavery. At this particular moment, they were stopped by a body of water, the Red Sea. The Egyptian chariots and horses were rapidly coming to attack and bring death and extinction. It seemed there was no way out and then a miracle. Suddenly, before them, the Red Sea opened up and there was only one way—only one way out—only one way to avoid death and extinction and that was through the Red Sea.

That visual image of only one way out of death and extinction is deeply woven into the theology of the Old Testament and New Testament. There was an old poster. There was a high piece of land on the left, a deep chasm in the middle, and a high piece of land on the right. The high piece of land on the left represented earth; the high piece on the right represented heaven; and then there was a bridge in the form of a cross that went from earth to heaven. It was only on the cross of Christ that we moved from earth to eternity. It was the only way—it is the only way.

## **5. Perfect Church**

Those of us who are a part of the church know we are not what Jesus called us to be. We spend too much and share too little; we judge too many and love too few; we wait too long and act too late. Perhaps you are saying, “Show me a church where ministers aren’t self-serving; where hypocrisy has been purged away; where church members don’t waste time and energy squabbling over petty details; where love is genuine, and I’ll become a member.” You’ll wait a long time. Such a church takes up no space on earth. It has floated up, up, up and disappeared beyond Oz. Perhaps such a church lives as a memory—a time when disciples believed, when faith could move mountains, and motives were pure.

## **6. Storms**

At age 93, Rose Kennedy was interviewed by a magazine reporter. By this time, four of her nine children had died violently. Another daughter, Rosemary, was mentally disabled all her life and would soon be gone.

Mrs. Kennedy had outlived her husband long enough to have seen his life told and retold in the press. She was an old lady, hit by tragedies again and again. The reporter asked about all this and Rose Kennedy answered, slowly, “I have always believed that God never gives a cross to bear larger than we can carry. I have always believed that, no matter what, God wants us to be happy. He doesn’t want us to be sad.”

She said, “Birds sing after a storm, why shouldn’t we?”

In the presence of death, it is not easy to express joy—at least not for the world to see. But those in Christ have an inward joy just the same.

## **7. Mother’s Influence**

Let us return to mothers.

Many scholars have concluded that you cannot really understand John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, unless you understand his mother Susanna Wesley. She was so instrumental in his life that she inevitably affected the movement and its direction.

Americans know that Abraham Lincoln led this nation through perhaps our time of greatest crisis; but who was it that made Abraham Lincoln the man that he was? Lincoln would have said that it was his mother.

I would submit to you this morning that there is not a person sitting here that on one, five, ten, a thousand different ways has not been forever influenced by their mother. I firmly believe that you cannot understand who a person is and what motivates them until you understand their past. You cannot understand a person’s past without understanding the source that co-created that person along with God—their parents.

## 8. A Prayer

I would like to close with a mother's prayer.

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper—not a homemaker. If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness—not godliness. Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh. Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window. Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk. Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys. Love is present through the trials. Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive. Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood. Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart. Before I became a mother I took glory in my house of perfection. Now I glory in God's perfection of my child.

AS a mother, there is much I must teach my child, but the greatest of all is love.