

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: When the Way Is Not Visible

Lesson: John 14:1-14

14 *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."*

Friends, today is the 5th Sunday of Easter. Now we have about two more weeks left in the Easter season. As we always do, as we remember the resurrection of Christ, let us say the Easter greeting together: Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

In life, there are moments when everything feels uncertain. Not even when everything falls apart, but there are times when our hearts are not at ease. Outwardly, things seem fine, and life continues as usual, but in one corner of our hearts, there is an anxiety that is hard to explain.

When we cannot see clearly ahead, when things do not feel settled, we sometimes think like this: "Is this going to be okay?" Sometimes that thought quietly rises within us.

(Slide 1) As I was meditating on the Gospel of John this past week, this verse stayed in my heart: "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

How do you feel when you hear this word? It is a very good word, isn't it? It is good, but at the same time, it also feels a little difficult.

Because... worry is not something we can easily put down. Worry does not become smaller the more we have it. Rather, it tends to grow the more we hold onto it.

But what we should not miss today is the situation in which Jesus said these words.

This word was not given in a peaceful situation. The disciples are anxious. They do not know what will happen. They are hearing that Jesus is going to leave them. This is a moment when their lives are shaking.

At that very moment, Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

This word is not just a simple command saying, "Do not worry," but it is Jesus' comfort given to people who are anxious. And then he continues and says, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places... I go to prepare a place for you." This means, "You do not understand right now, but I am already preparing for you."

Usually, we feel at ease when we can see the way. We feel at peace when we have a plan. We feel calm when we can see what is ahead. So we often ask God for a map of our lives, thinking that then our hearts will be more at ease. But instead of giving us a map, instead of showing us the way, Jesus decided to give us his life.

Thomas asks, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" This may also be our question. "God, I do not really know where I am going." "I do not know what will happen in the future." At that time, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

Jesus did not say, "I will show you the way." He said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life." This word makes us think again about our faith. We often think like this: "God, if I can see what is ahead, then I can believe." But Jesus says, "If you trust me, you can walk even when you cannot see ahead."

Friends, this is faith.

(Slide 2) And as I was thinking about this, I was reminded of something that happened just yesterday. This year marks the 150th anniversary of Clear Lake United Methodist Church in Willow River Parish. It is a very meaningful year for us.

Yesterday, we had a special event at the church called *If Teapots Could Talk*. Not only church members, but also friends of the church, past members, and extended family gathered together to celebrate the 150th anniversary.

51 ladies came, wearing beautiful dresses and hats. They sat around well-prepared tables, shared tea and scones, talked with one another, laughed together, and celebrated the 150 years of this church.

It was a very meaningful time. As I was watching that, a thought came to my mind.

One hundred fifty years is not a short time. Even ten years feels like a long time to us—so how many things must have happened over 150 years?

There must have been joyful times, but also difficult seasons as well. And yet, this church is still here today. It is still shining its light in this local community.

Then maybe... isn't this because God has been working ahead of us, even before our understanding, even before our worries?

Of course, it would be wonderful if we could lay down all our worries just as the Bible says. But in reality, that is not something easy to practice. As I meditated on this word this week, it became a question to myself as well.

“Am I a person who can only be at peace when I can see the way?” “Or am I a person who trusts God even when I cannot see the way?”

To be honest, I still feel that this is difficult, so I am still learning. There are still parts I do not fully understand, and there are still times when my heart is shaken. Even so, I try to hold onto this word: “Jesus is the way.”

When the way is not visible, Jesus becomes the way for us. So our faith is not in understanding everything, but in trusting Jesus. And that trust may not be something big. It can be something very small.

Taking one step today. Even though we do not understand everything, still choosing to trust God. Maybe that is what faith looks like.

Friends, there may be parts in your life right now where the way is not clear. There may be parts where your heart feels a little anxious. At that time, I hope you remember this word: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” I hope this word will not be a burden to us, but will be heard as comfort. Because we are not alone. You are not alone. There is the Lord who has already gone ahead of us and becomes our way.

So today, even if we do not understand everything, I hope we can hold onto this one thing: “Lord, even when we cannot see the way, we trust you.”

With that faith, I pray in the name of the Lord that you and I may take one more step today. Amen.