

Before I start let me make a quick comment May 5th is Red Dress Day, a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People

And our first reading where Stephen gets stoned to death, that there was a young man named Saul. Fun fact of the day this man later becomes St. Paul who wrote a good amount of the new testament.

So the setting for our Gospel reading is John's version of the last supper where he has just told the disciples that he will be leaving them in order to come back AND that Peter will abandon Jesus- they all will.

Which is why Jesus reassures them by saying "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." Jesus acknowledges their fear without condoning it, and leads them to faith with his response

There are many things in this short passage that I want to touch on today We have Jesus saying that in his Father's house there are many dwelling places; Jesus tells his disciples that he is **the** way the truth and the life and no one comes to the father except through him. He and the father are one- if you've seen him you've seen the father.

And our image of God being too small

There is lots here and if you've heard this passage before, I might be offering you a

different perspective to what you may have heard in the past.

So let's start with in my Father's house are many dwelling places. This is not a synonym for heaven or for after we die.

The location is found in relationship: God's relationship with us here. Now. Today.

Each of us.

What if this is about Jesus going to prepare a place for us after His resurrection in joyful expectation that we will join him in a

relationship. Its all about God indwelling in us.

And what if the fact that there are many rooms is a sign that there is room for everyone who wants to come and that no one is excluded. No one.

AND and that we can start living there now- living in that relationship with God as of today because Jesus has prepared for us

and has coming back through the Holy Spirit - living in us today and everyday

How can Jesus do that? Think of it this way if you have a glass of water and you have a tablet that you dissolve in the water, the tablet disappears but becomes part of the water. Jesus disappears & comes back as part of us in and through the Holy Spirit- if we choose.

Teachers like Jesus like value students who ask challenging questions. Hello Thomas hello Philip. His answer to

their questions is pastoral. It's not about who is going to heaven.

His leaving isn't abandonment. It's a promise of greater intimacy with his followers.

He answers Thomas "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."

I have mainly heard this verse interpreted in an exclusionary manner, like "become followers of Jesus or else suffer the consequences." If you don't have the

right theology, come from the right denomination then you are doomed.

I don't think Jesus is saying this at all.

Jesus is answering Thomas's question by saying he is the way, truth, life. The early followers were known as the followers of the way.

So what is the way? Jesus is not giving directions. So what if he journeys with them and us.

What if he is the path-way that we are to follow. His answer to Thomas is basically "sure you know the way, you've been

walking it the whole time you have been with me. Not just walking the way but living it.”

We live it by being inclusive, loving mercy, being compassionate, doing justice, forgiving, walk humbly before God AND engage in living in non-violence.

We follow His lead by listening to the Holy Spirit and by following his teachings, follow in his footsteps.

Onto Philip’s question. It can be reframed as “what does God look like.”

Now Philip being a good Jew would know that no one has seen God

So what gives with Jesus’s answer “If you have seen me you have seen the Father.”

This speaks to the intimacy between the Father and Jesus. Jesus’s works all come from the Father. Jesus’s works are the Father’s works.

There was a Jewish notion that that an emissary bears oneness with the sender.

The same identity and the same authority.

Jesus is saying that the Father and Him are ONE

If you want to know what God looks like, look at the works of Jesus which are the works of the Father.

Look at his life, his deeds, his character: loving, including those who are excluded, forgiving and compassionate.

Now this next bit is a hard nut to crack: Jesus says “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be

glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.” [PAUSE]

This next question is funny but I ask it seriously- have any of you experienced that every prayer was answered exactly as you asked it? If yes please put your hand up- I want to talk with you.

I’m not sure we can fully understand this verse but I am pretty sure we can gain **some** understanding.

I think I am safe in saying that none of us has a perfect understanding of God and that our image of God is partial at best.

And God is calling us into an ever deepening relationship.

In our partial understanding of God we end up with small g gods in our lives and as part of our image of God. God calls us to go deeper.

You might have heard of some of these little g gods. Let me name 3:

There's the bargaining god: the god who we bargain with saying such things like "if you do this for me then I'll do that. Or thinking that "if I am good enough (see

perfect) then I will be loved and forgiven."

[PAUSE] I'm not sure that our GOD works that way. Please note that You are already beloved, you are already forgiven.

Then there is the safety god. This god cures all ills, keeps me safe from harm of any kind. So why have I suffered?

Finally what about the perfect will god. With this god everything, that ever happens, is god's will. So what happens when we sin. Do we say that the "perfect will god"

allowed me to sin so I can be forgiven? Am I responsible for my sin or is God? I think God calls us to go deeper.

These are three examples of how to partially understand God. Again God is constantly calling us into an ever deepening relationship and with any relationship that deepens we get better and better in knowing the other. [PAUSE]

So this week I would invite you to one of two things.

I invite you to first think on your image of God, reflect on your understanding of God and ask God to deepen it. Do this repeatedly. Maybe something will happen.

Secondly God is with us and in us.

Today he lives in us and we live in him. We are invited by God to walk God's in footsteps and he in ours. He invites us to be His body. His hands and feet in a world that needs healing, love and justice,

This week I invite you when you walk to think God is walking with you. When you do something with your hands that God is acting through your actions, including your words. May your relationship with God deepen this week.