

Sermon for 2017 Yr A Easter 5  
Preached Sunday 5/14/2017 at St. James', Mount Vernon  
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On the first several Sundays since Easter Sunday, our Gospel stories told us of Jesus' resurrection appearances to his disciples.

But now, even though we're still in the season of Easter, our Gospel lessons are back to the days before his passion.

In our lesson today, Jesus speaks to his disciples and tells them things that can only sound like nonsense to them. When Jesus says, "you know the way to the place where I am going," Thomas throws his arms up in frustration. "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" When Jesus says, "If you know me, you will know my Father also," Philip acts like he's been busy doing something else while Jesus talks. "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

Before Jesus' death and resurrection, his disciples just can't understand what Jesus is telling them, because they really don't know yet who Jesus is. It is only by his resurrection that his words begin to make sense.

Before his crucifixion and death, Jesus made three promises to his disciples.

He promised that they will always have an abiding place with him, that they will always be with him and that he will always be with them.

But what does "always" mean, or rather, what did "always" mean before the resurrection? It just meant until things change. When Jesus was taken and crucified, the disciples thought they were forever separated from him by the chasm of death... "always" didn't mean much to them then.

It was Jesus' resurrection that showed them that Jesus had not left them, and was with them still, and would always be with them, at all times and for all time.

He promised his disciples a sure and clear way to God, through Jesus himself.

Before the resurrection, the disciples saw Jesus as their teacher, the one who was teaching them about God and the coming of God's kingdom... that is, teaching them about things other than himself.

It was Jesus' resurrection that opened their eyes to see him as the living image of God himself.

And Jesus promised his disciples a power that will not only sustain them but also enable them to do even greater works than Jesus himself.

Jesus anticipates the day when his disciples fully receive and accept the gift of God, to live into the fullness of God's life and to go out to spread the Gospel. The disciples though are still passive followers, dependent upon his lead and initiative.

The shock of Jesus' resurrection wakes them up to realize that the Good News of God in Jesus is in them, and that it needs to be shared, and that they are the ones called and empowered to share it.

The promises of Christianity don't make any sense except when heard and understood with a heart of faith. The disciples can't understand the full meaning and import of Jesus until Easter, until Jesus comes to them resurrected. Resurrection gives new meaning to his promises that say to us "always," that show us God, and that send us with boldness and confidence.

Just as the resurrected Jesus made himself known to his disciples, he continues to make himself know to us, so that they and we might believe... and by believing, receive the promises that he has made to us. The one who is the way, the truth, and the life has shown us the way, given us the truth, and brought us to life.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

*The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.*