

Easter 3

I take as my text today, from the 14th chapter of St. John's Gospel:

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in Thy Sight, O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer.”

In last week's Epistle passage from St. Peter, verses 19 thru 25, of the second chapter, we were reminded that, while we have been delivered from the bondage of sin, we still are subject to the trials and tribulations inflicted upon us by an unbelieving world. The measure of our faith in Jesus Christ will be judged by those around us by how well we accept insult and injury while remaining steadfast in our love of God and all of his creation.

In this week's Epistle passage from St. Peter, verses 11 thru 17, we are reminded of our Christian Duty which he quite well sums in the concluding verse:

Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.
Honour the king.

It is essentially a charge to follow in the footsteps of Christ, to imitate our Lord in the way we live our lives, in the way we interact with others, and to love the Lord our God, to worship him.

We are reminded, thus, through the Epistle of St. Peter that we are still part of the world, a world that is hostile to the Christian.

Still, during the Easter Season, we are constantly reminded that on Easter Day we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, a reality seems to fade over the course of the year; yet, the Resurrection is the one single act of God that sets us apart as Christians.

It is our belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ that defines us as Christians; it is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the very foundation of Christianity.

We would not be Christians were it not for the Resurrection.

Moreover, every Sunday is the Lord's Day, and a reminder of the Resurrection.

Indeed, the Book of Acts bares witness to the Resurrection as the final proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Chosen One of God; the final proof that Jesus is exactly who He says He is: the Son of God.

Jesus, throughout His time with His disciples, revealed to them Who He is, and prepared them for what was to come.

In the Gospel from the 21st chapter of St. John appointed for this Third Sunday after Easter, Jesus is preparing His disciples for the moment when He would be taken physically away from them. He would die on the Cross. He would be laid in the tomb, and they would see Him no more; that is, as they were accustomed to seeing Him.

Yes, He would return to them, but clothed in a new reality: clothed in His spiritual, risen Body. Their eyes would behold Him once more.

These were difficult words for His disciples to understand.

Throughout the New Testament, especially in the readings appointed for Morning Prayer, as well as the Gospel for today, there is the certainty of what lies ahead for the Christian. But the Christian's future is not in this present world.

That certainty Jesus affirms in the passage from St. John 14, one of the lessons appointed for Morning Prayer today:

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

Just as our Lord was resurrected, so will we who die in Christ be resurrected, and our future will be with Him.

We know because He said so:

In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you.

When we think of mansions, our mind conjures up grand estates, beautifully decorated inside and out.

But, when we look at the word used in the Gospel for “mansions,: we find it to mean something more.

The word *monai* has several connotations though translated as “mansions” or “abiding places.”

The first connotation is that of different “ranks of blessedness” in heaven, given out according to one's goodness and fidelity while in this present life.

Another is “stages upon the way” that one, in progressing from this life to a heavenly life, goes through, a sort of progress and development as one advances. Simply stated, the idea that we are not prepared to be in the Presence of God, and must go through different stages of preparation, though it is a bit more complicated than that.

But, there is a connotation that does seem to best express the concept that Jesus was presenting: quite simply that in heaven there is room for everyone. An earthly house may become overcrowded, but our Heavenly Father’s House will always have room for us. We, who have followed in our Saviour’s footsteps on earth, will not be shut out of our heavenly home.

When we arrive at the door, Jesus will be there to welcome us. He has prepared the way.

Like the pilot boat in the harbor leading the ships safely to their home, Jesus has forged the way, making it safe for us to follow in His footsteps.

We shouldn’t be surprised to learn that a name often ascribed to Jesus, *prodromos*, is also the name by which the pilot boat is called, and is translated into English as “forerunner.”

Indeed, our Lord has blazed the way to heaven, to make the way safe and sure for us.

And, Jesus is the **Way** as He said to Thomas:

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Jesus is the Way: He doesn’t just tell us about the way, but IS the Way.

Jesus is the Truth: many may try to teach us the truth, but ONLY Jesus can say “I am the Truth.”

Jesus is Life: whatever we want and define as life will always fall short, but Jesus is what life is. He is Love, and everything the human soul longs for.

It is Jesus alone who can reveal God to us; it is he alone who can lead us into the very presence of God.

When we accept Jesus as the Way, and the Truth and the Life, we also accept a responsibility: to at all times bear witness to the Truth.

It is a responsibility conditioned by Christian love, a love that is a reflection of God’s love.

We celebrate the Love of God every Sunday when we remember the Resurrection, and proclaim to the world that “Jesus is Risen,” to the echo that “He is Risen, indeed.”

Because of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have a new relationship with God, an intimate relationship where we can take our troubles and sorrows to him, and in return be comforted by his love and see our sorrows turned into joy, a joy that is complete and cannot be taken away.

Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ is that of child to father. God is our Father in Heaven, and we are his adopted children, who with his Son will be joint heirs of his Heavenly Kingdom, eternally united to him through love.

That is the Promise given to us through Jesus Christ, made good through the Resurrection.