

Sunday, May 3, 2026
Pastor Jane Gingrich
Spiritual Health Practitioner
Royal Inland Hospital, Kamloops, BC
Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 (5) 1
Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” (NRSV)

On this fifth Sunday of Easter,

we return to the vulnerable position of early Christians.

We heard first the summary of the death of the first Christian martyr, named Stephen, in the Book of Acts.

We join together, inviting God’s presence, strength, and guidance with the words of the psalm.

We are named believers as God’s chosen people, listening to the call to share where we see the mighty work of God being revealed among us.

And all of these scriptures lead to the Gospel that offers the disciples comfort through perseverance and faith.

We are listening in community to these early stories and experiences, expressing together in psalm and prayer **our** hope for God’s strength and compassion- not because of what was written more than 2000 years ago, but because of our lives and experiences right now.

As Easter celebrations fade and the last of the plastic egg shells are on clearance at the local grocery store, we return to the vivid death and life of our every day experiences.

These 50 days of the season of Easter continue to remind us of who Christ is among us.

[*pause*]

We, like Stephen, so often must say what others do not want to hear.
In friendships,
in our work,
on that committee,
we are called to speak truth and name what is happening and what we notice.

While we are not stoned to death – in this Canadian context – as Stephen was martyred, our words also come at a cost.

Offering the best of who we are,
to the glory of God
and in service of neighbour,
speaks to whose we are – and gifts us
the strength and peace we need to carry on in faith.

[*pause*]

There is so much in our lives right now that causes us to metaphorically stumble:

How do we make sense of a world that continues to promote exclusion, judgement, and greed?

What do we say when we notice brokenness instead of neighbourly care?

And – as we approach May 5th – when will our calls for action to protect indigenous women and girls affect real change?

[*longer pause*]

“How can we know the way?”

Thomas' words find us today in a relatable place.

How can we know the way?

In the middle of these 50 Easter days,
it is hard to know whether we want to turn back and cling to Jesus' cross,
or keep journeying on;
where we know that we are continuously being made new,
and we are continuously being prepared for the calling
that we might or might not be ready for
when Pentecost comes in a few more weeks and sends us onwards.

Our grief, the very real grief that we live with
keeps us wanting to cling to that cross.

Because at least then we would have something to hang on to;
at least then it might feel like we have a compass on the way.

But Jesus reassures Thomas – *and us* – saying, “I am the way.”

[*longer pause*]

For a moment I want to step in another direction on this reflective journey together
today:

I am glad you are here.

In the isolation of this global era;
with so much that is seeking our attention;
in the midst of life that might be mundane or chaotic or somewhere in the middle-

I am happy that you are present to hear the Word of God and be refreshed in
worship today- because this is part of how we experience being prepared by God
on the way.

Whether we are two or three or perhaps two or three hundred
(and if you are watching this alone- then recall the many who have also heard this
proclamation in worship and online)

When gathered, we remind each other of the face of God by seeing each other.

We offer each other the presence of God.

And we receive the promises of God in speaking with and to one another.

Beloveds, “*Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*” (Peter 2:10)

[*pause*]

In what I am able to offer in ministry as a hospital chaplain – a Spiritual Health Practitioner – I see the loneliness, worries, and pain of so many.

Last week a senior in hospital asked, “do you see people who aren’t religious too?” - and yes I do. He went on to say, “that’s so good, because what would you do in here when you’re waiting for tests and getting hard news, and worrying about your family- if you didn’t have faith. You need to talk with *someone*.”

Another patient, many months back, dying and worrying about life after death kept lighter conversations about the weather and her family as our topics for three days before she blurted at the end of a visit, “I don’t think my husband knows I’m dying, but I feel it. I keep wondering, am I going to hell? Because, I haven’t gone to church since I was a teenager.”

Another patient, in pain for weeks and unable to receive relief recited again and again, psalms and passages, including, “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places... I go and prepare a place for you.”

[*pause*]

Jesus’ death on the cross and new life in us does not promise that suffering will end.

In faith, Christ promises to be with us in all experiences of suffering.

When we look at the harm in our world right now, some might say that suffering is constant.

Then, today, we hear again the promise that holds us together:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe”

It was said right there,
but often we miss the promise- we get stuck in thinking that we are alone and
there’s more for us to DO here.

We think that the action is ours: believe!

Yet, *we name* that faith is a gift from God. **To believe is a gift.**

Belief shows up when we need God’s comfort and care.

Whether we are troubled by the news on our screens or the experiences of our lives
and confused by what it all means for the days ahead;

in loneliness, worries, or pain,

No matter what comes next-
Christ has gone on ahead
and is preparing a place for us.

In the words we share in friendship,
in the caring work we offer,
and, on that committee,

Christ is preparing a place in us, through us, and ahead of us.

Believe.

This gift is *given for you*.

May it be so.