

**5/3/26**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**  
**For Group Meetings from April 26<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another, to follow in the way of his commandments, and to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (John 10:1-10) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** John 14:1-14

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What commands does Jesus give in verses 1 and 11?
2. How does Jesus describe his relationship to God in this passage?
3. What does Thomas ask, and how does Jesus respond?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When life feels unsettled, where do you instinctively turn for security?
2. When do you feel closest to Jesus? When do you feel most distant?
3. Does the idea of eternal life bring you comfort, confusion, or something else?

**Memorize this verse:** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1)  
What is one specific worry you can intentionally entrust to God this week?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

## Notes for ChristCare leaders:

The first line of this familiar passage is so out of kilter with the rest of the passage that it's almost comical. But if so, it is a poignant, ironic, almost sorrowful humor. After all, Jesus is preparing his disciples, his friends, for his departure. He knows this will be incredibly challenging for them and so begins with words intended to bring comfort – “do not let your hearts be troubled” – but that seem to fall short of the mark. The disciples' hearts are troubled, very troubled. And so they ask questions. Have you ever noticed that? That when we are struggling to make sense of things or feel overwhelmed by circumstances, we often turn to questions: Why is this happening? Who is doing this? Why did they die so young? How did this happen? Why don't you love me anymore? The disciples' questions have a similar poignancy. When Jesus says, “you know the way to the place where I am going,” Thomas replies quite bluntly, “Lord, we do not even know where you are going, how can we know the way?” And when Jesus suggests that he is the way (and the truth and the life, to boot) and that anyone who knows him will know the Father, Philip also reaches his limit and makes a request that is even more audacious – indeed, asking what no pious Jew would dare ask, to see God: “Show us the Father.”

Jesus' answer – “Have you been with me so long and still do not know me” – is less about his own frustration than it is an attempt to re-orient the question. Notice: Thomas and Philip ask questions about what Jesus is saying: where are you going? Can we see the Father? And behind both of these, I suspect, is another, more primal question: why? Why are you leaving? Why can't we go along? Why is this happening? In response, Jesus offers not so much an answer as he offers himself. The question of “why” is an important question. It gives voice to our deep need to understand, to comprehend, to make sense. But it's also often quite difficult, if not impossible, to answer. What should Jesus say? Should he offer some atonement theory as explanation? Try to break down the Father's divine and cosmic will so they could understand it? Describe the complex, profound, and sacrificial love that motivates his actions? Would any of this made any sense or lessened the grief of the disciples? Instead of answering the “why” question, Jesus answers the question of “who.” He is the one who loves them and, in turn, who makes demonstrably clear the Father's love. He is the one they have known and can trust and who will do what they ask and provide them what they need. Sometimes we want answers, even as what we really need is relationship. So perhaps this week we should come clean about all the unanswered questions that are part and parcel of our life of faith, in order to remind each other that whatever our questions, whatever our doubts, whatever the unknowns, Jesus still makes himself available to us. Indeed, Jesus still offers himself to us, inviting us into a relationship that may not answer all of our questions but ultimately transcends them. Nor is this the only example of when the reality of relationship defies and transcends rational explanation. For, truth be told, I don't know why my parents made so many sacrifices for me or why my wife loves me. But I do know that they do and she does and that these relationships are what matters.

I've always been captivated by Martin Luther's sense of the “real presence” of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Rather than side with those who said that mere bread could not hold Jesus' body, and so argued the bread was not really bread but had been transubstantiated into Jesus' body, or with those who again said that mere finite bread could not hold Jesus' infinite body, and so the bread was just bread, a reminder of Jesus' love, Luther argued that, as with the Incarnation, there are times that, indeed, the finite can hold the infinite. What we experience in the Lord's Supper, he believed, is just that kind of real presence. It's a confession of faith that doesn't boil down very easily to clean cut answers but instead offers a relationship: It is really God who is really present for us as we really are in a way we can really receive. I think there is something similar going on here: whatever the disciples may ask, Jesus will keep offering not simply answers but himself. Because as important as “why” is, “who” is even more important, for we live and die – and are born once again – in and through our relationships.

## Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

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### *Traditional version:*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from  
evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### *Contemporary version:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the  
power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen