

Worship – May 10, 2020

GATHERING MUSIC

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP (Take a moment of quiet to prepare for worship)

OPENING MOTHER'S DAY PRAYER

Lord, on this day set aside to honor and remember mothers, we give you thanks for our mothers. We are grateful that you chose to give us life through them, and that they received the gift of life from your hands, and gave it to us. Thank you for the sacrifices they made in carrying us and giving us birth.

We thank you for the women who raised us, who were our mothers in childhood. Whether birth mom, adopted mom, older sister, aunt, grandmother, stepmother or someone else, we thank you for those women who held us and fed us, and who cared for us. We pray that our lives may reflect the love they showed us, and that they would be pleased to be called our moms. AMEN

A BRIEF CONFESSION

In the surety of the Risen Christ, we are confident to make our confession to God.

Lord of Life, hear the prayers of your people.

In the surety of the Risen Christ, we confess our failures and brokenness.

Lord of Life, forgive and heal your people.

In the surety of the Risen Christ, we seek God's mercy and compassion.

Lord of Life, renew for service, we your people.

God forgives, heals, and renews us for blessing in the world. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Lord, we remember the mothers who have gone before us.

For their love, sacrifice, struggle and joy, we thank you.

Lord, we remember the mothers of Scripture who are part of our story as we are a part of your story.

For their courage, faith, love and fierceness, we thank you.

Lord, we remember those who have not given birth to us, but are mothers to us.

For their gift of themselves that they have given, we thank you.

For the women who struggle with fertility, for those women who have lost children;

For their tears, for their strength, for their wisdom, for their lives, we thank you.

(re: worship, written by Claire Schoepp)

GREETING

The Lord be with you.

God's love and nurture is the source of our lives.

We worship and commit our lives to a God of steadfast love.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st reading – I Peter 2: 4-10

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'

To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner', and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall. 'They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

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.

2nd reading – Psalm 31:1-5

*In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.*

Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily.

Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.

*You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.*

Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Gospel reading – John 14: 1-14

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In 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? And 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. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 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.'

SERMON

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs_IsoagaHE

4th Sunday of Easter

IN THE ZONE

May 10, 2020

John 14:1-14

Ever had a troubled heart?

Most all of you (I would be willing to bet) has had a troubled heart at one time or another.

Even little children, who may not describe

their times of distress and melancholy as being of a “troubled heart” ... even little children

have their times of sadness and disillusionment.



The first words

out of Jesus mouth in the reading today are: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled”* ... easy to say, difficult to do.

As Jesus said these words, if anyone had a troubled heart, it would have been him.

This is part of a very long speech

by Jesus on the night he was betrayed, arrested, ridiculed by soldiers, and then the next day nailed to a tree and executed.

Those prospects would trouble anyone’s heart ... and, yet it is Jesus who offers these words of consolation to the disciples who were distressing over the ending of his ministry and their time with him.

They had given up everything to follow this man:

possessions,

livelihoods,

families ... he has shared everything that is

possible to share with them: stories,

instruction,

Most of all,

Jesus shared himself with them ... he is the one they called Lord & Teacher, he was

vulnerable with, them to the point where he opened himself up betrayal, denial, desertion.

They were a close-knit group ... the disciples and Jesus were ... the disciples

saw, heard, and participated in many amazing things by following Jesus ... and now, it was

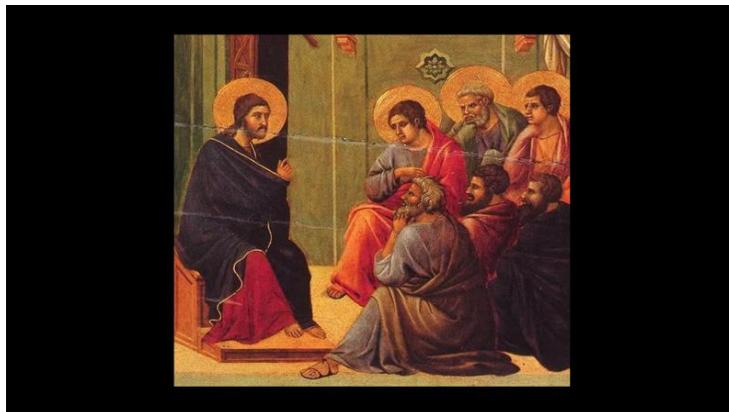
all coming to an end.

So here they are

as one artist visions it ... Duccio Di Buoninsegna in the early 14th century painted this scene

of Jesus informing the disciples of his departure ... it's titled, Christ taking leave of

the Apostles.



I think the artist captures

in the expression on their faces, the troubled hearts of the disciples ... along with the calm surety of Jesus saying: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled”*

What was Jesus thinking, though ... was he

simply saying what a lot of us say to those of a troubled heart: *Everything will be fine.*
Everything will be OK.

We say that, a lot,

even though we have no idea if everything will be fine ... we say that, because we don't know what else to say in the face of distress.

We want to be positive and so we say: *“It will be OK”*

Was this what Jesus meant?

Did he say, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled”* ... because he did not know what else to say in the face of distress and simply

I think we all know that

this wasn't the case ... Jesus wasn't simply trying to be the positive cheerleader.
He knew exactly what he was saying.

He goes on to talk about

dwelling places and that where he is, there also will the disciples be ... this is more than
positive thinking in the midst of a dire situation.

It's a difficult thing to know

exactly what Jesus meant when he spoke of preparing dwelling places for us ... and that he
would bring us to where he is.

The disciple Thomas speaks for all of us when he asks:

"Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?" (John 14:5) ... which
is another way of saying – *"What are you talking about?"*

The way I see what Jesus was

talking about is like when athletes and musicians speak of *"being in the zone"* ... ever heard
that phrase before, *"being in the zone"*?

When people use the term *"in the zone"* they are usually describing

a *"state of being"* where an individual reaches a peak level of performance ... the phrase is
often used in reference to athletes or musicians.



When they are *"in the zone"* it means they are in a place
of increased focus and attention ... they perform better,
thoughts flow smoothly with accurate concentration

Now, experts (meaning scientists) aren't sure, exactly,
how "*being in the zone*" works ... some think it may be an issue of nutrition, while
others think it has more to do with sleep patterns or a combination of various factors.

Athletes & musicians often put in a lot of effort to create situations (they believe) can help
get them "*into the zone*" ... some speak of daily routines that make it happen,
others think that eating certain foods sharpens their mental
acuity making it easier to access "*the zone*".

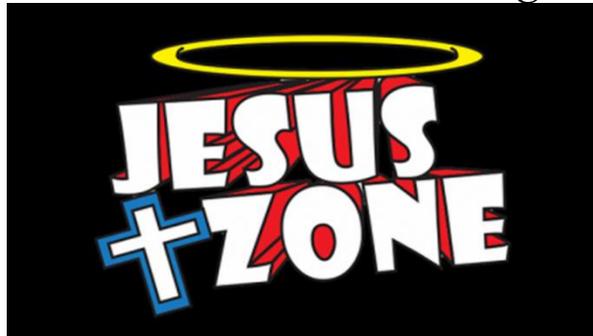
Whatever the case, "*being in the zone*" is spoken of as if it were

a kind of spiritual experience ... a state wherein one seems more in tune with
something bigger than themselves.

My take on what Jesus was

getting at is that he was saying: "Believe in God, believe also in me ... these dwelling places
that I'm talking about, these are places of "*being in the
zone*" with me. Even when I am not with you in person,
you can still "*be in the zone*" with me.

Well, what might that look like ... this "*being in the zone*" with Jesus



For me ... I picture "*being in the zone*" with Jesus in these ways:

First of all ... your compassion for people who are hurting is heightened.

And second ... your ability to forgive is strengthened.

And from there ... other things begin to fall into place because when you grow
in compassion and forgiveness ... Your anxieties are reduced, your peace is increased.

What you see wrong in the world motivates you
to get involved to make a difference.

You become more patient and less frustrated.

Your desire to be faithful becomes more important than
control & success.

Your need for recognition,

approval, and

power recedes so that the light of Jesus

Sounds like the perfect person ... right?

Well ... Jesus is quoted to have said: *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

(Matthew 5:48)

When you are "*in the zone*" with Jesus, you are in a "certain state of perfection" we could say.

What we hear today

is Jesus' promise that we can have access to him,
that we can be "*in the zone*" with him ... and when we are, we glimpse
the perfections of compassion & forgiveness
patience & peace, we
become the perfect body of Christ in the world ... even if just for a
moment of time.

Athletes and musicians when "*in the zone*" are in that zone
only momentarily, it does not last for days, weeks, and months on end ... unfortunately,
something of the same happens to us when "*in the zone*" with Jesus.

Our anxieties, our worries, and our self-centered concerns
seem to always push us out of the zone, this is part of our human nature ... nonetheless,
we can have our moments of being "*in the zone*" with Jesus.

So, athletes & musicians work at "*being in the zone*"

with certain diets and establishing routines that they feel make them more ready to "*be in the zone*" when competing or performing ... but, how does one get into "*the zone*" with Jesus?

INDEED ... HOW DOES ONE "*GET IN THE ZONE*" WITH JESUS?
GOOD QUESTION.

Well ... I've discovered that it isn't rocket science;
it isn't some pyramid scheme where you work your way up into
some enhanced spiritual state;
it isn't even some deep knowledge of scripture (as good as that
would be) that gets you into the zone with Jesus.

For me ... what get's me into the zone with Jesus is finding that "Dwelling Place"

that he prepares for us ... a place where I can be open and vulnerable with God,
a place where I can (even if only for a moment) release
myself from whatever it is that distracts me.

For me, the “Dwelling Place” is my daily walk where I both exercise & pray;



the “Dwelling Place” is the moments in bed at night when I first turn out the light for sleep;
 the “Dwelling Place” is Sunday morning before worship when I pray to be open to God’s voice.

These are my “zone moments” ... and I see them as something that anyone of us can do,
 these are not just “pastor” habits ... certainly not rocket science,
 these are normal activities for anyone seeking God in
 someway.

And in these moments ... my compassion is heightened,
 the call to forgive and understand others is pronounced,
 the push to serve is underscored.

So, there may be “dwelling places” that

Jesus is preparing for us after this life is over ... that’s how we have commonly understand
 these words of Jesus we hear today.

**But, his promise to the disciples (and to us) is that
 there are dwelling places in the here and now.**

Jesus calls us to these dwelling places now ... to be “*in the zone*” with him now,
 where the practice of compassion & forgiveness brings to us a deeper peace and a
 desire to serve. AMEN

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*We believe in God, creator of all things, ruler of all that is and all that is to come.
 God is transforming the world into the place of God's justice and mercy.*

We follow Jesus, who taught and healed the broken, who died and rose, revealing God's abundant grace. He sent disciples out into the world to heal, to proclaim the good news of God's grace and mercy; we follow Jesus as our Teacher, Lord, and Savior for the sake of transforming the world by the grace of God.

We rely upon the unfailing grace of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the community of the church as the Body of Christ, and the power of forgiveness. We are the People of God called to be light in the world. We are the People of God empowered for service in Jesus' name. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Compassionate God, we are held in your love. Nurture us and call us to be in that spiritual zone where we are more in tune with you and your desire for our lives, that what we say and what we do brings light and love into our relationships and into the world. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, we are held in your love. We pray for a world caught in the grip of sickness and fear in a time of pandemic. We pray for a world where violence and war rages because of hatred and the thirst for power. We pray for a world where many are in need of food, clothing, and shelter. Use us to bring healing, to bring peace, and to be providers. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, we are held in your love. We bring before you all who are on the Bethany prayer list. We pray for all medical personnel and essential workers. We pray for leaders of cities, states, and for leaders of countries to work together in ways that can bring peace, provision, and healing. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, we are held in your love. We, each of us, come before you now in a moment of silent prayer (Following your silent prayer say: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.)

Hear us now as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray:

(You may say the traditional Lord's Prayer or the Aramaic version printed below.)

O Creator, the one who gave birth to the universe, You are the sacred source of our being.

Focus Your ways, Your light, within us, make us useful for Your purposes here on earth so that
Your desire and our lives become one.

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.

Loosen the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release the strands we hold of other's guilt.

Do not let surface things delude us, snare us, and lead us away from You and Your purpose.
But free us from what holds us back, give us power to live as you intended and created us to live.

From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act,
the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age. AMEN

OFFERING *(Please mail your weekly offering to the church.
4300 N 82nd St. Scottsdale, AZ 85251)*

PRAYER OF BLESSING

Let us pray:

Good and gracious God, you are the source of all blessing. In generosity, you provide all we need for the living of our lives. We, in turn, are called to be generous ourselves. We pray that what we give be used as an expression of your presence and healing in the world. We thank you for this opportunity to give back something of the blessings we have received from your hand. AMEN.

BENEDICTION

Now hear these words from the prophet Isaiah:

*Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

*May you find something of God's peace on this day.
Be all things to all people for the sake of the good news of the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen*

DISMISSAL

*Live in the strength of God, serve in the power of the Holy Spirit .
We are blessed this day, we go forth to be a blessing! Thanks be to God.*