

Making Room

John 14: 1-12

“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 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.

The other day, my spouse said something I hadn’t heard before. She said, “The kids are getting bigger. They all share one bathroom which isn’t going to get easier since they will soon all be teenagers. do we put all the kid’s sports stuff? There isn’t enough space in the garage for all your midlife-crisis-growing-collection of tools.” And then she said it: “*Maybe we need to find a bigger house because we need more room!*” Jesus says, “In God’s house there is plenty of space.” And as he finds himself at the end of his life he says, “I’m going to prepare a place for you.”

Have you ever felt like there wasn’t room for you? Maybe it was because of who you are, or what you believed. Maybe it was in school, or at work, or in church. Right now there are eleven bills proposed since April 5th—eleven!—in North Carolina which aim to do away with all things transgender. Bills that are trying to legislate their existence. They don’t ask them or experts how this impacts their mental health. Heck, they won’t even let elected representatives, like Zooey Zephyr who is trans, speak in opposition—they’ve locked her out of the conversation. There’s no room. Or, what if you’re an immigrant in this country, like our undocumented friends who worshiped here for a while. Did you know: they crammed 17 people into a 4-bedroom, one bath home—air mattresses spread out across the house. The message is clear: no room. I mean, isn’t this what we’ve heard our African American friends saying when they say, “I can’t breathe!” We live in a claustrophobic world that openly tells people there is no room for them to even breathe. It troubles our heart, especially when the church does the same thing by saying, “Jesus is the only way.” No room for Muslims. No room for Jews—even though Jesus was Jewish! Maybe we remember a situation when there was no room for us.

Except, Jesus says in God’s reality there are many dwelling places. There’s enough space for everyone. I heard that last Sunday six people from Trinity went on the Multifaith tour. Was there a sense that these different faiths were missing out on something? Of course not! There is a sense of mystery and holiness in all faith traditions. So when we interpret Jesus’ words as saying he is

the “only way, truth, and life” does it make more room or less room? You see, if we think he’s saying *he, the person—as a noun—is the only way* then I think we are missing the point. But if we hear him saying that *he as a verb* is the only way then he is saying something quite different. After all, God is love. Jesus’ way is love. Jesus and God are the same, which is what Jesus is saying because they are both love. I think it is helpful sometimes in these loopy-loop passages to replace the word “God” or “Father” with the word Love. Check it out:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in Love; believe also in me. In Love’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 Love except through me. If you know me, you will know Love also. From now on you do know Love and have seen Love.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Love, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen Love. How can you say, ‘Show us Love’? Do you not believe that I am in Love and Love is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Love who dwells in me does Love’s work. Believe me that I am in Love and Love is in me, but if you do not, then believe 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 Love.

Sounds a bit different, doesn’t it? Jesus didn’t come to create a new religion which says, “We’re in and you’re out. We hold the truth, and you don’t!” No, he came to open something up that was true everywhere, for everyone, all of the time. Turns out, Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, because Jesus’ way, truth, and life is Love. In Love’s house there are many dwelling places. And here is one of them. There’s room, because you are one of Love’s dwelling places as well!

So here’s the mystery which isn’t really a mystery at all: not only does Jesus tell us it is love which creates space, but he tells us how love creates space. You see, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment to love one another. Then he tells his disciples he is only hanging with them a bit longer. Peter—bless his heart—boldly says “I will go with you! I will lay down my life for you if I have to.” To which Jesus answers, “Well, actually, you’ll deny me three times. But do not let your heart be troubled by what is about to happen.” And what is about to happen? He is about to die and in dying he is somehow making room for Love’s deeper way, truth, and life. A way full of forgiveness, and compassion, and solidarity with the oppressed...because forgiveness, compassion, and solidarity with the oppressed is what Love does. It is how Love creates room for all people. And all means all.

The truth is, Jesus has to let go to make room for the Holy Spirit. Jesus has to let go to make room for us. Love makes room. And just like when our Spanish speaking friends were here, we had to make room. And now we do so once again for others who need space to breathe and be.

This is the way, the truth, and the life. It's why Jesus says we will also do the works that he does and in fact will do greater things. Because Love's house has more than enough room and has many dwelling places. Here happens to be one of them. More, *you happen to be one of them as well.*