

## Fifth Sunday of Easter May 10, 2020

Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

# Living the Lutheran Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.*

*An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM(5pm Kenya/Uganda):** At Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134 and on line through <https://zoom.us/j/815200301>
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<http://carolinasnalc.org/page/63/>

### Hymn of the Day

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 633 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not listed**  
**“At the Lamb’s high feast we sing”**

“This ancient hymn was originally written to reflect the passage from death to life that all Christians receive at the font. How this occurred in the earliest days of the Church is slightly different from how we practice it now. Since the first converts to Christianity were adults, the Church provided an extensive period of instruction before receiving these catechumens into the shepherd’s flock through the waters of Holy Baptism. These Baptisms were reserved for one day of the year: Easter.

In the darkness before Easter dawn, the new converts would be led to the font, holding candles, where they would receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. After they emerged from those saving waters, they were clothed with a fresh white garment, representing their newfound purity through the righteousness of Christ. After Baptism, the new converts would enter into the assembly of believers as they celebrated together the Sacrament of Holy Communion in commemoration of the Lord’s resurrection...

The first four stanzas of the hymn alternate between the subject of Holy Baptism and the subject of Holy Communion...

In the next three stanzas, we return to the paschal feast celebrated each Easter, when the earliest adult converts would receive Holy Baptism and come to the table for the first time. The Holy Triduum (the three days of Christ’s death, rest in the tomb and resurrection) represents the victory of Jesus over death and the grave, and so we celebrate that victory when we gather on Easter to receive His crucified and risen body and blood in the Sacrament...”

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1QT4e86zxM> Gr. 7 – “At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing “· One in Christ: Hymns of the Season © Concordia Publishing House 2011
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xNSm5r\\_2vQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xNSm5r_2vQ) “Celebration of Vespers and meeting with the Bishops of the United States of America at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington (April 16, 2008)”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznLcXgmkLE> At the Lamb's High Feast · OCP Session Choir Glory & Praise: Third Edition, Vol. 10 © 2016 OCP.

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001  
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During the season of Easter the Old Testament reading is replaced with a reading from The Book of Acts. The Old Testament/Epistle titles are changed to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading**– “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint”

**Psalm** – “Put not your trust in princes,”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading** – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,”

**Gospel** – “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*”

**Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Acts 7:55-60 (Next week: Acts 17:16-31; RCL, Acts 17:22-31)**

*“Wouldn’t it be great if our church suddenly grew by the thousands? The book of Acts demonstrates that this is possible. It also reminds us to be careful what we wish for, because growth isn’t always easy or painless. It often means we have to deal with changes and challenges. But because of Jesus, our victorious and risen Lord, in the end, it’s worth it all!...”*

*(Continued after the reading)*

### **Seven Chosen to Serve Verses 1-7**

**6** Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists<sup>a</sup> arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers,<sup>b</sup> pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” <sup>5</sup>And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup>These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup>And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

### **Stephen Is Seized Verses 8-15**

<sup>8</sup>And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen...

- a. [Acts 6:1](#) That is, Greek-speaking Jews
- b. [Acts 6:3](#) Or *brothers and sisters*

## Stephen's Speech Chapter 7 Verses 1-53

**7** And the high priest said, “Are these things so?” <sup>2</sup> And Stephen said:

“Brothers and fathers, hear me...

<sup>51</sup> “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.

<sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, <sup>53</sup> you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

## The Stoning of Stephen Verses 54-60

<sup>54</sup> Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

<sup>57</sup> But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together<sup>l</sup> at him. <sup>58</sup> Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

- a. [Acts 7:46](#) Some manuscripts *for the house of Jacob*
- b. [Acts 7:57](#) *Or rushed with one mind*

**Cross references:** **There are 124 cross references, primarily to the Old Testament in Stephen’s speech.**

### “I. With growth the church faces internal tensions

- A. Growth:** the number of disciples was increasing...
- B. Conflict:** there were some sore spots among different believers...
- C. Example:** the problem was handled wisely and well...
- D. Result:** “The Word of God spread;” There was an even greater explosion of growth within Jerusalem, and a large number of priests were included.

### II. With growth the church faces external opposition.

- A. Growth:** Stephen’s reputation grew as he became increasingly important. (He was one of the 7!)...

**B. Conflict:** The Synagogue of the Freeman (Roman slaves of Jewish background who had been set free and now lived in Jerusalem) opposed Stephen—perhaps they felt jealous, threatened...

**C. Example:** Stephen answered the accusations against him without descending to their level...

**D. The result:** good, but not in a way we would expect...

**Conclusion:** The book of Acts is not just the acts of the apostles. It is the continuation of what Jesus began during his earthly life. It is Christ in action! As seen by Stephen, the risen Christ is even now at the right hand of God in glory. This means that as Lord of all, he graciously rules all things in heaven and on earth especially for the good of his church—even for our good! Yes, there are internal tensions faced by congregations, church bodies, and Christianity in general. Yes, external opposition grows ever more fierce by the hour. But by faith we can see the gentle hand of our Good Shepherd leading, guiding, feeding, comforting, and protecting us along every twist and turn of the hazardous way. The danger of growth is great. The need for growth is even greater. But our Savior's love for His dear Church is the greatest of all. Amen!" [Read the complete outline by following the link below.](#)

- <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/growing-pains-daryl-bahn-sermon-on-people-in-acts-45760>  
[Daryl Bahn](#) Pastor of St. John Lutheran, Black River Falls, Wisconsin

### Psalm 146; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 (Psalm 66:8-20; RCL, the same reading)

*A Closing Quintet: Psalms 146-50*

*Psalms 138-145 make up the final collection of psalms marked "Of David" in the Psalter. The collection concludes with the promise, "My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD..." (145:21). Psalms 146-150 then express that praise, each psalm beginning and ending with "Praise the LORD!" (in Hebrew, "Hallelujah!"). This quintet closes the entire Book of Psalms.*

*The circle of those invited to praise in this closing quintet is continually expanding. First, the individual calls himself or herself to praise ("O my soul") and resolves to do so (146:1-2). Then the call goes out to the people of Jerusalem (147:12) or Israel (149:2) to praise. Finally, the quintet closes with an invitation to "everything that breathes" to join in the praising (150:6).*

*The structure of Psalm 146 exhibits the usual two-part pattern of the hymn. Psalm 113 is a good example of that pattern, with a call to praise (1-4) followed by reasons for praising (5-9). Psalm 146 begins with a call to praise (1-2) and supplies a number of reasons for praising (5-9). Verses 3 and 4 insert some words of instruction (3-4). Verse 10 consists of a confession of faith and a final call to "Praise the LORD."..."*

- [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1469](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1469)  
[James Limburg](#) Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

## Put Not Your Trust in Princes

**146** Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

<sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

<sup>3</sup> Put not your trust in princes,  
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.  
<sup>4</sup> When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;  
on that very day his plans perish.  
<sup>5</sup> Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the LORD his God,  
<sup>6</sup> who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them,  
who keeps faith forever;  
<sup>7</sup> who executes justice for the oppressed,  
who gives food to the hungry.  
**The LORD** sets the prisoners free;  
<sup>8</sup> **the LORD** opens the eyes of the blind.  
**The LORD** lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the LORD loves the righteous.  
<sup>9</sup> **The LORD** watches over the sojourners;  
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.  
<sup>10</sup> **The LORD** will reign forever,  
your God, O Zion, to all generations.  
Praise the LORD!

“This is a praise psalm. Indeed, they’re all praise psalms here at the end of the Psalter. Psalms 146-150 make up a sort of “praise collection” -- with the Hebrew root halal (“praise”) appearing 40 times in the last five psalms. Each of those five psalms begins and ends with the Hebrew “Hallelu-Jah” -- that is, with the exhortation to “Praise the Lord!” ...”

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1955](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1955)  
[Hans Wiersma](#) Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN

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“Psalm 146 is structurally simple, yet theologically profound.

Its genre is one of praise and it is part of the crescendo ending of the psalter. The psalm begins and ends with the same “Praise the LORD” or “Hallelujah,” providing an envelope called an “inclusio.” Inside this envelope are two doxologies surrounding two stanzas, giving a symmetrical shape to this prayer.

The first doxology is personal and enduring and better translated as “I will praise God with my whole self” instead of the standard “soul.” “Soul” provides a meaning of an inner devotion or that the “soul” is something other than the self. The prayer calls for us to involve our whole selves in the life-long act of praise to the LORD. It is a call to action...

The next stanza (verses 5-9) returns focus to the one praying. It opens with the Hebrew *'asher*, often translated as "happy." In the context of a praise psalm, this definition works as long as we remember it is not a passing or superficial happiness, but a deep abiding "contentment" with the human condition and one's God. It is life as it is supposed to be and it is achieved by having God as one's "help" and "hope." This is the contrast to the stanza above. If happiness is elusive, contentment may even be more difficult. We live in a world where contentment is countercultural. Much of our economy is based on consumerism and a capital economy fueled by the desire to acquire more and more things. Yet true contentment is centered in God, not human made items and plans.

...this psalm offers an oasis; a cool, comfortable place where we can put aside the world and praise God for who God is.."

➤ [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2676](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2676)

[Beth L. Tanner](#) Professor of Old Testament, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, NJ

### 1 Peter 2:2-10; RCL, the same reading (1 Peter 3:13-22; RCL, the same reading)

*Our reading from 1 Peter for this week is organized around a pastiche of Old Testament texts.*

*Through allusion and quotation a structure, a means for understanding who Christ Jesus is, and who we are in Christian community, is set up.*

1. **Allusion.** "You have tasted that the Lord is good," is a clear allusion to Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him."

2. **Quotation.** "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious," is a somewhat indirect quotation of Isaiah 28:16, "See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: 'One who trusts will not panic.'"

3. **Quotation.** "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," quotes Psalm 118:22, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."

4. **Quotation.** "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall," is set up as a quotation, but the citation is not biblical.

5. **Allusion.** "Proclaim the mighty acts," alludes to the recurring Old Testament theme of remembering what God has done for Israel -- most notably in the exodus (cf. Psalms 77, 78, 105) -- by which God made Israel God's chosen people.

6. **Quotation.** Finally, 2:10 is a quotation of Hosea 2:23 "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."

*Of the nine verses that make up our reading for this week, six of them are either alluding to or directly quoting Scripture. All of this textual dependence serves a particular purpose, defining the Christian community..."*

## A Living Stone and a Holy People Verses 1-12

*2 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.* <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” [Isa. 28:16](#)

<sup>7</sup> So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”<sup>[a]</sup> [Ps. 118:22](#)

<sup>8</sup> and

“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.” [Isa. 8:14](#)

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

“In this Lectionary passage from 1 Peter 2 (and I will leave it to wiser people than I to figure out why we moved backwards in 1 Peter 2 from last week’s Lectionary text to this one!) Peter writes, “Once you were no people.” Some translations render this line as “once you were *not* a people,” but the original Greek just has the negative word “no” there. Once you were no-people. Once you were nobody, a nowhere man or a nowhere woman, a marginalized and isolated cipher ignored by the world and off floating on society’s fringes.

No-people.

That, Peter tells his readers, is who they had once been. Nobodies belonging to no one in particular and going nowhere special in life. No-people. Can you hear the aching sadness in that?

If you can, then the lyric and lilting nature of this passage can hit home. If you can sense the longing behind what Peter is saying, then you will also sense afresh what this supper of Holy Communion really gives us, too. Because in this passage Peter makes clear that if you want to talk about the mass of this world’s lonely, rejected people, you would have to place Jesus in their number.

1 Peter 2 is one of many places in the New Testament that lifts up what, all things being equal, should have been one of the Old Testament’s most obscure of all passages. It’s that line from Psalm 118 about the stone that the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone of some new and grand building. If you are familiar with that verse from the psalms, then it’s not because it leapt off the page at you when you were reading the psalms for devotions one evening. I doubt that Psalm 118 even counts as the favorite psalm for most of us. Yet for some reason, Psalm 118:22 went on to become the single most-oft quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament. This odd line from Psalm 118 was quoted more often by Paul and Peter than any other verse in the Bible. Psalm 118:22 beat out Psalm 23, it beat out any of the words from Isaiah or Jeremiah.

Somehow the apostles spied in that lonely verse about a lonely and rejected stone the very essence of Jesus and his gospel...”

- [https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/easter-5a/?type=lectionary\\_epistle](https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/easter-5a/?type=lectionary_epistle)  
Scott Hoezee

## Submission to Authority Verses 13-25

- a. [1 Peter 2:7](#) Greek *the head of the corner*

**John 14: 1-14; RCL, the same reading (John 14: 15-21; RCL, the same reading)**

*“This Sunday is the first of two Sundays from the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of John.*

*Chapters 13-17 are best known as the Farewell Discourse in the Fourth Gospel. Chapter 13 narrated the footwashing, the last meal shared between Jesus and his disciples, and the departure of Judas to the dark side (13:30). Chapter 14 picks up with direct words from Jesus to his disciples about his impending departure. They are words of comfort and hope, promise and plain speech, and little mincing of words as to what’s soon to take place.*

*It should seem just a little odd, or feel like an itching burr under our liturgical saddles, that a chapter in which Jesus offers his formal good-byes to the disciples is heard in the Sundays after Easter, when he is, well, for lack of a better term, back...*

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1994](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1994) [Karoline Lewis](#)  
Associate Professor of Preaching and the Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching  
Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

## “The Holy Gospel according to the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. John”

### I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life Verses 1-14

**14** *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;<sup>[a]</sup> believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to where I am going.”<sup>[c]</sup>*

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.<sup>[d]</sup> From now on you do know him and have seen him.”**

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, **“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>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 authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.**

**<sup>12</sup>“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me<sup>[e]</sup> anything in my name, I will do it.**

### Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit Verses 15-31

1. [John 14:1](#) Or You believe in God
2. [John 14:2](#) Or In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you
3. [John 14:4](#) Some manuscripts Where I am going you know, and the way you know

4. [John 14:7](#) Or *If you know me, you will know my Father also, or If you have known me, you will know my Father also*
5. [John 14:14](#) Some manuscripts omit *me*
6. [John 14:16](#) Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also [14:26](#); [15:26](#); [16:7](#)
7. [John 14:17](#) Some manuscripts *and is*

## This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“In the flow of John’s Gospel, what we see in John 14 takes place before the crucifixion. Yet in the Year A Lectionary we read this a month after Good Friday and in the Eastertide season. So what do we see here in John 14 that is startlingly instructive? As we will note, the disciples were no doubt startled by what Jesus said that very night and that would only deepen in the next 24 hours. So how do Jesus’ words here “sound” in both the context in which they were originally spoken and now to also our ears given what we know was coming next for Jesus?

First, a note on the “acoustics” of this chapter. So often we read the “Let not your hearts be troubled . . .” lines here with confidence and some gospel bravado. But do you think that is how Jesus spoke those words? I doubt it. It was a dark and gloomy night for Jesus. He knew and sensed what was up. Further, back up into what we call John 13 and we will see Judas’ sad departure and the foretelling of Peter’s tragic denials. Things were falling apart fast around Jesus and so I think it is at least as likely—if not from a human point of view far *more* likely—that Jesus spoke the words of John 14 with a quivering chin and with tears forming in the corners of his eyes.

After all, Jesus is telling them not to let their hearts be troubled but the main reason he needed to say that is because in reality, trouble was all around. And as Gethsemane will soon prove, Jesus’ own heart is in turmoil enough as it is...”

- [https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/easter-5a/?type=the\\_lectionary\\_gospel](https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/easter-5a/?type=the_lectionary_gospel)  
Scott Hoezee

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### Thomas' complaint

This passage exhibits some perplexing moves. Jesus begins with his famous words in vv. 1-3, capping it with the promise that he would take his disciples to himself, so that wherever he is, we'd be. Total intimacy. Thomas, whom I like to call the Eeyore character of John, acts in character, taking the practical, realistic/pessimistic role, and asks a fair question. On the heels of Jesus' grandiloquent locution about abiding places and enigmatic travel plans, Thomas, in a voice that I imagine to be somewhat weary but not yet despairing, cuts to the chase: "We have no idea what you're talking about, first of all, and second of all, upon what basis *should* we have known?" And here the moment of judgment (*krisis*) arrives for Thomas, et. al., in the form of one of the "I Am" (*ego eimi*) statements distinctive to the Fourth Gospel (cf. 6:35, 48; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 15:1, 5); they are groping around aimlessly for *a* path, *a* truth, *a* life, and THE path, truth, and life is staring them in the face and they can't see it. They are looking for seven habits, nine steps, or ten commandments when the answer lies in intimate, if confusing and challenging, relationships, the preeminent one being between Jesus and them. Insofar as Thomas has missed that point, he is judged. But judgment in John always comes as diagnostic, forward-looking, rather than retrospective. Jesus calls Thomas into a future that is wholly dependent upon relationship with Jesus and God. Jesus also stops Thomas from complaining

about all the reasons he's in the ignorant spot he's in. "This is hard; how are we supposed to know?; we don't get it." Jesus doesn't settle for that but calls Thomas out--I am it; surely you know me. In that case, you know all you need to know. Notice that Thomas never gets to respond. However, he gets his shining moment in 20:28 when he utters a full confession of Jesus' identity: "My Lord and my God." He's the only character to do so in the entire Gospel...

### Philip and the Father

Thomas was fixated on "the way," and his sense that Jesus hadn't provided full and necessary information related to it. Now Philip is concerned with seeing the Father. As he did with Thomas, Jesus says to Philip--look in front of your face. The answer is not in some esoteric code or far off where you cannot attain it (Dt. 30:11-14); no, the Word, the Christ, the Father, all of it is here and available right now. Philip thinks he's asking a concrete, simple question: "Just show us the Father and we're good to go." Not too pushy, no long list. And how does Jesus respond? Again, with words that may sound judgmental to us, because they are, in a way. Jesus lights into Philip--don't you understand that my only purpose in relating to you guys is exactly for the purpose of exhibiting the nature of God, of deep, sacrificial, life-giving, almost embarrassingly intimate relationship? "What or whom do you seek?" Jesus often asks (*zeteo*; John 1:38; 5:44; 18:7) because he knows that what we seek often determines what we find. My congregation had a conversation about hope last week. One sage person pointed out that everything we actually deeply hope for is available to us right here and now, we just don't see it. John would agree. Notice that Philip never gets to respond..."

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=68](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=68)

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In keeping with the times...See last week's Gospel for the reference.

