

**TALK**

**14th May 2017**

**Puy de Serre**

**Service of the Word**

*John 14:1-14*

*Acts 7:55-60*

*Psalms 31*

Can you remember the last time you opened an English or French newspaper, or switched the télévision on, to be greeted by 'good' news? Instead, in France, we read of concern about a new President, backed by a one year old party, with more élections coming up in June; we have the UK facing the uncertainties of Brexit, while embroiled in a hastily called General Election, where soundbites seem to be preferred to explanations of policies; and then we have the political scène in the United States!

What's that line in 'Abide with me'? 'Change and decay in all around I see'! Its easy to just throw up our hands, retreat to our own little corner and let the world try to sort itself out. What can we do to make sense of the world we find ourselves in and to play any part in creating a better future? If we feel confused by what's happening around us, imagine how the disciples were feeling as Jesus spelt out some home truths in preparing them for his death and résurrection.

In our reading from John's gospel, the disciples are in the Upper Room. There are dark days ahead.. Judas has gone out to betray Jesus. Jesus has told Peter that he will deny him 3 times before the cock crows. Jesus knows his crucifixion is near; A world of darkness, fear, sadness and chaos is soon to come upon them, and they will lose hope. Jesus had never promised them an easy time, indeed he had told them it would be very hard for them.. Now he calls on them to trust in God the Father and in himself - to hang on, by putting their faith in him, as they will always be with him where he is.

When Jesus talks of there being many dwelling places in his Father's house, it can mean simply that there is room for everyone. The world may close its doors, society may lock us out, but God has room for us. As Jesus tells the disciples, 'If it were not so, I would have told you'. But 'dwelling places' can also refer to resting places on our journey of faith -where we will find refreshment and comfort. God's is not a static world, nor is his kingdom and our faith will not develop if we do not look to him for guidance and support as we face change.

Jesus says, 'I go to **prépare a place for you; and when everything is ready, I'll come and get you**'. He goes on ahead, for us to follow, and to make our way easier; like a trailblazer, who goes ahead to check the road is safe for us, or like a pilot boat guiding a vessel into a safe harbour, he leads us into the fullness of God's kingdom. There is a place in heaven specifically for us; if you like, a seat with our name on it.

But when Jesus tells them that they know where he's going and how to get there, it seems to throw them and Thomas seeks clearer directions. While he's remembered as 'doubting' Thomas, some of us might prefer to think of him as 'honest' or 'courageous', as he said what we can imagine everyone else was thinking, but didn't have the courage to say!

How often do you or I, when lost on our travels, have to ask someone for directions? OK, we'll not dwell on the tendency of most of us men to press on regardless! Sometimes we're given instructions such as , 'take the first left, straight on for 200 metres, then turn right' etc. But, from time to time we find someone who says, '**I'll get the car out; just follow me**'. And, if we keep our eyes on our guide, we can be confident of getting safely to our désired destination.

Jesus tells the disciples that he is the Way to God and that they know where he's going and how to

get there. Thomas says, *'We don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?'* Jesus replies, *'I am the Way, the truth and the life'*. He is our constant companion on our journey through life and through him we come to life eternal. But, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, how often is Jesus talking to us without us recognising him or his voice?

How can we know the way to God, unless its through Jesus, who is both God and man? As the Way, Jesus is our path to the Father; as the Truth he embodies all God's promises; and as the Life he joins his divine life to ours, eternally. He's the visible and tangible image of the invisible God; the revelation in human form of what God is like. Our search for God ends in Jesus.

When he says we can ask for anything, we must remember that our requests must be in his name - that is, in accordance with God's nature and will. He cannot grant anything that is contrary to his nature. His name is not an open door to our own selfish desires. While we would claim that we're trying to become more like God, we also recognise that our creator God is beyond our comprehension, so how can we let others know what he's like and how to find him?

We use phrases such as the Good Shepherd, or a Forgiving Father. When Philip, one of the disciples, said to Jesus, *'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied'*, Jesus replied, *'Have I been with you all this time, and you still don't know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.'* And, of course, for Jesus the comparison was fully justified. Can those around us see something of God in us?

Jesus carried out his earthly ministry in an area under foreign control, where people were desperately waiting for someone to overthrow the occupying forces and give them back control of their own nation and future. Sound familiar? But he did not spend his time waiting for others to make their moves or by worrying about the state of the world. He knew what his Father expected of him and he obeyed him.

He cared for the needy and for outcasts; he loved his friends, he comforted the sad and lonely, and forgave the repentant. God's like that, said Jesus- caring for those whom others despise or find repellent- giving them all his time, attention and love; comforting them and forgiving without limit. He calls us to do the same in his name.

*'I am the way, the truth and the life'*.

In the weeks and months ahead, there will be many times when we are called upon to question where we stand on the issues which are facing Europe and affect our own future. At the moment, there are so many uncertainties. But God's still in control and he's expecting us, Christ's body on earth, to carry on with his work. Jesus has promised to prepare a place for us, and all believers, in God's eternal kingdom. If we believe and obey him, our future is assured. Let's ensure that, through the way we live, others hear this Good News are to respond to his offer of salvation and hope.

*John Matthews*