

EASTER 5
MAY 10, 2020
JOHN 14:1-14
SO MANY QUESTIONS.

Studies say 4 year - old children ask about 300–400 questions per day. Mother’s ask about 100. My estimate for the number of questions per average person per day would be about 20.

How many of you have been asking questions lately? Be they big, important questions, ones concerning the future, living a new normal, or just daily, run of the mill questions which we ask on a routine basis.

Questions are an important part of everyday conversation, because they serve as an invitation to dialogue and an opportunity for further learning.

If you take a look at John’s Gospel, questions are an integral part. Right in the very first Chapter, a disciple asks Jesus where he is staying. In Chapter 3, Nicodemus asks how a person can be born again, and the Samaritan woman in Chapter 4 wants to know where she can get the living water Jesus is talking about. And on it goes, as Peter asks “Lord, to whom shall we go? As Pilate asks Jesus if he is the King of the Jews, and all kinds of others ask Jesus questions that give him a chance to teach more deeply the truth he has come to reveal.

Of all the questions in John’s Gospel, the ones in our lesson today, from 14:1-14 are certainly some of the hardest to answer (and maybe some of the most embarrassing).

At this point in the story, it’s Thursday evening, the night before the crucifixion. Jesus is very aware that he will die soon, and tries to prepare his friends for what is about to happen. In fact, after the last meal he will have with them, Jesus spends a great deal of time talking about his departure (the next 4 chapters), and what we look at today in Ch. 14 comes right at the beginning of this discourse.

A few minutes before this, Jesus tells them that one of them will betray him, and he tells Peter that he will deny him three times.

It’s in *this* context that Jesus tells them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

I wonder how they reacted to that statement...“What do you mean, don’t be troubled? You just dropped the bombshell that you’re going to die, and that some of your closest friends will betray you! Are you serious, Jesus?”

How many of us had had those moments when our hearts were not only deeply troubled, but downright disturbed? Even to the point of anguish.

Yet Jesus asks his disciples not only to believe in him, but to trust him – to commit their future to him.

And then he starts talking about going away, preparing places and coming back again – and he implies that they should know what he’s talking about – he actually says that they know the way to the place where he is going.

God bless Thomas – ever the realist – he asks another one of those questions – “Jesus, we don’t even know where you’re going! How in the world can we possibly know the way?” And when Jesus says that he is the way, and asks again that they trust him, Phillip can’t stand it anymore. He blurts out the one question that no faithful Jew would ever ask: “Show us the Father”, Phillip says and we shall be satisfied.” Or to put in more plainly “what does God look like?”

John doesn’t record this in his Gospel, but can you imagine the gasp that went up from the disciples?

See, in ancient Israel, it was simply understood that no one could see God and live. When Moses made a similar request, God put him face forward in the cleft of a mountain and passed by, and all Moses saw was the glory of the Lord shimmering around himself. He was only able to turn around and look after God had passed by, so that all Moses saw was the trail of God’s glory.

God is too much for us to see, for us to bear – too holy, too powerful, too infinite for us mere mortals to see and live.

And yet – Phillip asks to see God anyway – it’s an outrageous and inappropriate thing to ask.

But if we are honest with ourselves, who of us hasn’t been there? I know i have...

At my wits end – desperate for some hope that things will get better – that God is in the midst of the mess – if He would just show himself – praying that the tragedy that happens is not all there is...

Like when a cancer has returned...
Or a loved one dies unexpectedly...
Or when your spouse has left you...
Or after yet another miscarriage...
Or when the twin towers fell...
Or when a pandemic swept the land...

See, each of us has moments when we want some reassurance, some glimmer of hope, that all we have heard and learned about God is not just some false story, but true. “Just show us the Father” we cry out, “and we will be satisfied.”

To which Jesus responds, not in frustration, but in love, both to Phillip and to us, “have I been with you all this time, and yet you still don’t know me? If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.”

Which takes us right back to the beginning of John’s Gospel, where after the “word that is with God and is God, and became flesh and dwelt among us that we might live” – after all this John says “no one has ever seen God, but only the Son who is close to the Father’s heart. He has made him known.”

And there you have it – the two truths of the life of faith

- 1) No one has ever seen God – and sometimes it is so difficult to believe, to trust, to keep faith in and with a God no one can see.
- 2) Jesus, is the Son, the word made flesh. If you’ve seen Him, (and you have seen Him), then you’ve seen God and so know what God looks like, and what God is up to, and who God is for.

Jesus is trying to tell the disciples that he must die for one reason – to show them – and us – God – to show us God’s grace and mercy – to show us just how much God loves us and how far he will go to demonstrate that love to us – that we might believe – and in believing, have life in his name.

So the next time you are at your wits end, when your heart is troubled and your blood pressure rises with anxiety, remember to look to Jesus, the one who preached God's mercy and taught God's love, the one who healed the sick and opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame to walk, and then conquered death, so that even the grave can no longer claim us.

Because what you see in Jesus – this is what God looks like – this is who God is – love – perfect love – for you, for me, and for all the world.

Let us pray:

Gracious God,

Do not let our hearts be troubled. In the midst of the fear and anxiety that this time in our history brings, remind us that You are always with us. Help us call to mind Your goodness and mercy, that we may live in peace. In your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.