

## Living in Uncertain Times – Which Way?

[John 14: 1-14](#), [Acts 7: 55-60](#)

You may feel as though this period of lockdown is a kind of limbo. We are in a period of waiting: unable to meet, we have to put our lives and plans on “hold”. The innate sociability of humans is frustrated, our instinct to gather to mark significant occasions, such as the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day, birthdays or the loss of a loved one have no real outlet.

There are times when you find yourself asking, “Where are you, God?”

God’s response is simple: “I’m here.”

Jesus’s disciples found themselves in a state of confusion as he spoke to them after he had washed their feet. He has told them that he is leaving them, hinting mysteriously to a journey which he is about to take where they cannot follow for now, but will later. Furthermore, Peter is faced with the harsh news that he will disown Jesus three times before the cock has crowed three times.

Their understanding of who Jesus is and what he is setting out to do has been thrown out of balance. Their own sense of security has been threatened. Everything must have felt very fragile and uncertain at that point. If Jesus’ words were true, what would happen next? Was there any way of stopping this awful set of events?

Jesus’ words are designed to reassure them, to realign the disciples with the promise that he, and his Father, God, are with them, that there is no need to fear this uncertainty: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”



Thomas and Philip’s are understandably confused. Jesus is speaking in metaphors; picture language about houses, routes and a life which seems to be utterly at odds with the one which they are experiencing; he is pointing to death and betrayal.

It’s common to pick on Thomas’ frustrated outburst when reading this passage: “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”, but Philip is also desperate for some clear direction: “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

Where is God? Who is he? How does Jesus link to God? These are questions which we may ask, just like Philip.

The Hebrew name for God is YHWH. I am. The name so holy that only four letters can be written down. He calls himself “I am” through the Old Testament.

Have you noticed that John’s Gospel portrays Jesus using the phrase “I am..” on many occasions? (forty-five times!) This isn’t just chance; Jesus is making a powerful point about who he is. Look at verse 10: “Don’t you believe that **I am** in the Father, and the Father is in me?”

Jesus is the Word made flesh. The terrifying, utter holiness of God, YHWH, the I AM, is given human form, the one who washes dirty feet, heals the sick, feeds the hungry, weeps with those who grieve, laughs and joins in at parties. He is there with humanity in all its joy and pain and points to his Father.

He is at the heart of life, even when it is a struggle. He promises, “I will come back”. He promises resurrection and a safe future – because it’s who he is, it’s what he does, living, dying and rising from the dead. It’s in his very nature – because he is Son of the Father – God.



Which way now? The cruelty and chaos of the account of Stephen’s brutal death by stoning may seem to be a horrible second reading alongside the reassurances of our Gospel passage. Where’s God in that violence, where the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, gnash their teeth in fury, jam their hands over their ears and then kill Stephen by stoning?

Even in the midst of that chaos and cruelty, God is there. Stephen has a vision of Jesus, risen and glorified: “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” God, the Son and the Father, is present with him even at this point. Stephen is not angry or vengeful towards his attackers, but calls on God’s loving mercy for them: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” There is a new way of love and peace open even in such a situation as this.

You may find yourself asking, “Where’s God in my situation? How do I pray for others who are struggling with uncertainty, too?” Jesus replies, “I am here.” Can we ask for a greater sense of his presence for ourselves and others? How might we help to show others Christ’s presence in the world too?

Jesus, in his words “I am” shows us the way to God. “I am the way and the truth and the life.” As we live with uncertainty, which way are you going to choose?

### ***Our Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Easter:***

Risen Christ,  
your wounds declare your love for the world  
and the wonder of your risen life;  
give us compassion and courage  
to risk ourselves for those we serve,  
to the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

Support us, O Lord,  
all the day long of this troublous life,  
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,  
the busy world is hushed,  
the fever of life is over  
and our work is done.

Then, Lord, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging,  
a holy rest, and peace at the last;  
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*(John Henry Newman)*

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