



Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 3, 2026

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene

Ern Warner

Acts 7: 55-60

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

Psalm 31: 1-5, 15-16

Lord, cast your bread upon troubled waters and bring calmness to the storm.
Amen.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Easy words to say, harder to live by, especially in the times that currently surround us. There are many troubling things — new dramas and conflicts seem to be around every corner, breathlessly reported nonstop in our electronic age. It is no coincidence that the term “doomscrolling” is in vogue among people who use the Internet, as they transition from one expression of outrage to another. It seems our society is fixated on the tawdry, sensational, and scandalous events that surround us. Algorithms drive our searches, almost mesmerizing us with a never-ending spiral of war, suffering, scandals, famine, and disasters. The Buddha said, “All you are arises from your thoughts.” If your thoughts are fixated on the devastations happening in the world, how can you keep your hearts from being troubled?

Today's Gospel reading offers a lesson for us. We find that the disciples' hearts are troubled. Jesus has told them that he will be leaving them, and is trying to console them. Jesus tells them to believe in God and believe in me. He further tells them that in my father's house, there are many dwelling places—and that he is going to go and prepare a place for them. That he will come again and take them to himself, so that where he is, they may be also. Yet Thomas says, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Then Jesus tells him, “I am the way, the truth, and the light. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my father also.” This may also be intended for us, to follow Jesus to the Father, to take our own place in the community of believers.

I thought about how long Jesus had been with the disciples and what they had witnessed him do. I found that Jesus had been with his disciples for about 3 years and, during that time, had performed at least 34 miracles, the most recent being the raising of Lazarus from the dead in Bethany. He had even sent them forth to heal others, and they rejoiced in what they were able to do. Yet their hearts are still troubled. Is it possibly because they have not yet been able to move beyond their reliance on the physical presence of Jesus, to fully rely on the unseen Father? Jesus told them, “If you know me, you will know my Father also.”

Philip says to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” It is as if the disciples have not fully grasped the power of the Father working through Jesus in all these miracles. Their vision seems to stop at the physicality of Jesus and cannot

transcend that to the unseen Father. Jesus says to Philip, “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 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, believe me because of the works themselves.” Then he tells them that the one who believes in him will also do the works he does and, in fact, will do greater works than these.

Jesus is encouraging the disciples to step out on their own and continue the work of the good news. Yet they seem to have an overwhelming attachment to him, to being in his presence, to having him be their anchor and the source of their strength. He is trying to open them to allow the Spirit to work through them, grounded in their belief in him and in God. The disciples have been told that their master is leaving them and that they must take his place in the ministry of the Gospel. They are being pushed out of the nest and asked to take to their wings, and fly on their own.

The disciples are experiencing what can be called a sense of groundlessness, a place where it feels like there is no sure footing, no certainty to hold on to. I believe we have all experienced it in our lives, in events that upend our familiar ways of being in the world and compel us to reshape our landscapes. I had such an experience some years ago, and the way it has shaped me has proved to be a blessing in my life, though it did not seem so at the time. I had been treated for prostate cancer, and the post-treatment tests were inconclusive about whether the treatment had succeeded or failed. Without a conclusive test, no further medical treatment could be done. This lasted for four years; my physician let me know that I was, in medical terms, a biological anomaly. This was definitely a period of groundlessness in my life, yet I developed the practice of living in the present moment, the only place where I truly am and the only place where God is. My troubled thoughts were about what could happen, how it would affect me, and what I would have to do, rather than realizing that the moment I was in had all I needed. I was living in a distortion of the future, instead of being with God in the present moment, where God is my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe. Those four years showed me that my times are in God’s hands, not my own.

But what can we do about today’s world? Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian, is credited with saying, “Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible.” This was before the Internet. Geoff Sinibaldo, a Lutheran minister, has modernized it slightly—“We must hold the Bible in one hand, and our hand-held device in the other – filled with Twitter feeds, Facebook updates, blog subscriptions, news articles..., societal studies, and local gossip. We must open our own experiences to reflection, and listen for God moments in the stories of others. We must...spend some time in the real world, in our community among our neighbors..., and at its heart, scripture still interprets them all, interprets us all, and brings us into God’s timeless truth again.”

The Three Jewels, or Pillars, of Buddhism are The Teacher, The Teachings, and The Community. We also have these three jewels in our church and community: listening for the God moments in others' stories, reading scripture together, and reflecting on what it means to follow Jesus in this world. We need not let our hearts be troubled, if we view the world through our vision of being and becoming a people of God. Yes, we still have to live in the world, but we can reflect on it through the teachings of our faith and by seeking God's presence. As a community of God, we have the teachings among us, and the teacher is always with us. So, do not let your hearts be troubled; instead, let us go forth, trusting in God, ourselves, and each other, to bring the good news to the world.