

John 14: 1- 14

### **Are we there yet?**

Did you ever see National Lampoon's movie Vacation, with Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo? Chase plays the eager dad, Clarke Griswold, who just wants to take his wife Ellen, and kids Audrey and Rusty on a road trip from Chicago to Wally World which is fashioned, of course after Disney Land. The idea is that this cross country expedition will be a wonderful time of family bonding. And so Clarke sits at the table with his family, pouring over the maps and travel brochures. The possibilities of places to see on the way are endless. Imagine going to see places like the world's biggest ball of string. Clarke even orders a new car for the trip, but the shyster at the car dealership hasn't ordered the right one. Still; he manages to convince Clarke that it will be great and sells it to him anyway.

Audrey and Rusty aren't completely sold on the idea of a road trip at first. It sounds like too much family togetherness – that is sitting in the back seat with each other sounds painful, nevertheless, the end destination is the carrot on the end of the stick, and they pack up and leave. They stop to visit the cousins, which of course is nothing short of a debacle. They get lost in the desert and nearly destroy their new car along the way. An Aunt joins them in the back seat with her dog. They all just want to give up and go home, but Clarke is determined. They are going to get to Wally World no matter what it takes. It is his mission. Audrey and Rusty spend most of the time in the back seat rolling their eyes and wishing that they were already there. They just can't take all the side trips, the weird relatives and near disasters.

Of course this movie touched a lot of raw nerves because many of us can recall a family vacation that was one crisis after another, including the kids in the back seat moaning over and over, 'Are we there yet?'

This passage in John that we heard today follows the chaos and fear of the last supper. Jesus and his friends have been seated around another table. Judas has already walked out the door to do what he has to do, and do it quickly. This meal becomes a time of both intimacy and shock. Jesus says that he is going away. Jesus gives them a new commandment; that they love one another as he has loved them. Where is Jesus going? What is happening? Peter proclaims that he will lay down his very life for Jesus, but Jesus says to Peter that he's got it all wrong. In fact Peter is going to betray him three times before the cock crows. Unthinkable.

And then comes today's reading: often read at funeral or memorial services.

**'Do not let your hearts be troubled.'**

**In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.**

**I go to prepare a place for you.**

**Where I am – you will be also.**

**You know the way to the place where I am going.**

This is a lot to take in. Thomas – the one with the nerve to ask the hard questions, says to him clear and to the point: 'We don't know where you are going!' We have no idea. What are you talking about? Odd isn't it, that Jesus uses an architectural image to help them imagine the kind of place that he is preparing for them. The gospel of John was written in Greek, of course, and the word that Jesus uses for house is oikia.

Oikia can mean the physical structure of a house, but it can also refer to the family that lives there: the household.

The Greek word for dwelling places is monai, and the verb meno which is related to it means to remain, abide, dwell or endure. John uses this word meno often in his gospel. In my Father's oikia, household, there are many monai- many places to abide, to dwell. Jesus is beckoning them to go deeper in the ways that they will abide with him, both now and in the future.

**Jan Richardson**, writes about this passage on her website, the **Painted Prayerbook**. She writes:

“Jesus tells his companions about these dwelling places in order to encourage them and stir their hope. At the same time, he desires to be clear with the disciples **that dwelling with him is not a far-off proposition; rather, he is calling them to live with him now and throughout their earthly lives.**

In John 15, which we don't visit in the Revised Common Lectionary this year, Jesus goes on to offer the image of the vine and branches as a vivid metaphor for how he desires the disciples to abide with him and he with them. Variations of **meno** appear many times in John 15; **Jesus really wants them to get this whole abiding thing before he goes.”**

Teresa of Avila was a Spanish nun, mystic and reformer in her own right, who lived in the mid 1500's. One of her most well known writings is called 'Interior Castle.' It isn't one of the most accessible pieces of writing, but in it, she envisions a dwelling place within us. She describes the soul as a castle, made out of a diamond in which there are many dwelling places. Within these dwelling places are 'sweet exchanges of love between God and us. She suggests that the entry to this castle is through prayer and reflection. While she has been relegated to the history of the Roman Catholic Church, I think that her image is a (tender and beautiful) one. I think she 'got' the abiding thing – she wrote:

**Let nothing disturb you; Let nothing frighten you,  
All things pass away. God never changes.  
Patience obtains all things. He who has God, finds he lacks nothing.  
God alone suffices.**

Let not your hearts be troubled. In my Father's household there are many abiding places. What image comes to your mind as a dwelling place with God, a place where you can sit with Jesus and just be?

While the disciples are still scratching their heads about this abiding place, Jesus tells them how to get there. Jesus says that he is the way, or in Greek – the hodos – a word which can mean a physical road or journey as well as a way of life. The disciples weren't stupid, but this isn't exactly mapquest or GPS. Jesus is dangling heaven before them, but for now he says - it's about the journey. The goal of the trip is God the Father, who is already in Jesus, who is already with them. Are we there yet?

Here at the Last Supper, Jesus speaks not only of future concerns but also of present ones, and he means for his friends to understand that **he is the way, the journey, and is himself a dwelling place.**

He hungers for them to understand this.

Jesus is not simply telling them about the destination he intends for them; he is calling them to make their dwelling in him now; he is urging them to make the way, the journey and Christ's very self, their home.

The way is not always easy.

We set out like pioneers and pilgrims, sometimes stumbling, sometimes running, sometimes needing a rest. We may hit the desert, a narrow road, a valley or sheer wilderness. We may have to rappel down a steep cliff face. We might get lost – or think we are. We may feel like we've just taken a detour to see the biggest ball of string in the world, but Jesus is abiding with us no matter where we are on this path. And it is a well trodden path.

This picture behind me is taken from the Camino in Spain. It is a well worn path of pilgrimage, used for centuries by thousands upon thousands of Christians and people who have hungered for God.

This journey and the journey we all walk on together, isn't always pop and sizzle. Our feet get sore, we get thirsty and tired. But sometimes there is a taste of glory, and reminders of not only our destination that dangles before us but of the One who is abiding with us in the midst of it and assuaging our thirst with living water.

We are travelling home, to the place where God lives, where Jesus lives .  
Are we there yet?

I've heard that, Home is where they have to take you in, or home is where they have to feed you. Home is where the heart is.  
Home is the space where you have room to just be. It's where memories happen, and hopefully is a place that is a creative haven;  
It's a place where we can live and move and have our being.  
It should also be a place of rest and community.

And you know the way. The door to this dwelling place has been there all along. Right there in our souls, in our hearts, waiting for us to see it, to walk through it and sit down and take a load off. We might as well start to make ourselves at home. Here at the table, Jesus wants to make clear that although the place he describes is a someday place, a promised home that he is preparing, it is at the same time a dwelling that his followers can have a glimpse of in this world, a space that even now takes form in our midst.

An abiding-place fashioned by—and fashioned of—the Christ who dwells in God, and is a dwelling place for God, and offers his own self to us as both a habitation and a way. A way that we find by opening the door that is already within us.

In this season, where are you making your home? Where are you dwelling? Is there a place in your life where you are pushing and pouring out your energy—something you are trying to wrap your brain around to understand it or to change it  
—when the way might lie instead in releasing, in finding the doorway that appears in letting go?

There is enough space, there are enough rooms, enough of what you need. Enough of what I need. Enough blessing for our world and for us all.

*With thanks for some of Jan Richardson's words.*

***The Rev. Cathy Victor***