

## **Jesus the Way, the Truth, the Life and Clue to Divine Glory**

### **John 14:1-10**

Following the awful events of Gethsemane and Golgotha, Jesus' appearance to his disciples in Jerusalem, as they locked themselves behind closed doors in fear, as well as to the two on their way to Emmaus, were some of the most telling events of divine glory, as Jesus prepared himself to accomplish his divine mission in the world and return to the Father. The experiences are dramatically unique: Jesus appearance to Thomas by the show of the mark of the nails in his hands, and by the show of the mark of the wound in his side, inspired us to find Jesus in the wounded, the fearful, the desolate, and the confused of society. Both experiences taught us that, apart from trying to understand Jesus only as he is revealed in glory, we should try to find Jesus in the socially and physically bruised, the lonely on the way, as well as on those who have fallen victims of society, such as the victims of gender-based violence. The walk to Emmaus invited us to see Jesus in the light of his ministry, as well as he wrestles and overcomes the power of death by his vicarious suffering and triumph over death on the cross. Apart from remaining detached from the lived realities of human struggle, the Emmaus' way points us down the dusty road and invites us to walk with Jesus into the suffering and needy world. In both stories, we have come to terms with the reality of divine grace at work in the world, that in the face of tragedy and hopelessness, as Jesus overcomes one of the most dreadful and unbearable forms of human submission on the cross, no amount of human pain and predicament that cannot be overcome. To the fore, last Sunday, both stories invited us to embrace the vicarious love and courage of the good shepherd who is prepared to lay down his or her life for the sake of the sheep.

Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you myself, so that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:1-3).

John goes out of his way to take efforts in stressing the real humanity and the real suffering of Jesus. Jesus imminent ascension to the father is the real truth that Jesus has to become human in order to make us what he is. Now having overcome the power of evil in the world, Jesus' divine mission seems to be nearing its end, his way to the Father seems certain and imminent, finding it hard to leave his disciples behind without a word of promise and comfort: Having identified himself in the mark of the nails in his hands and feet and in the mark of the wound in his side, Jesus is now more than certain that, even if he can leave the world, his disciples will never be left desolate as they will always find him in the scars of the wounded and bleeding humanity. Having met his disciples on the way and in the breaking of bread in their presence at the table of fellowship, as a sign of his future presence in their life and work, as well as an act of remembrance and assurance to them, that the one who was once slain is now the one who is present in their midst, Jesus is once more certain that even if he can leave the world, his disciples will always find him in the destitute and the confused on the way, in the breaking of bread, as well as in their fellowship and works of solidarity with the poor. Having reaffirmed himself as the Good shepherd who calls his sheep by name and willing to lay his life for the sake of the sheep, Jesus is certain that even if he can leave the world, his disciples will always find him as they tend the sheep, the lost and the marginalized. Having accomplished all these, it is now time for Jesus to ascend in glory to the Father.

As Christ prepares himself to leave, when in a very short period of time, the disciples' life circumstances may change, precipitating into chaos, their dreams shattered, it is only Jesus who can know best what is fitting to heal the situation. Jesus, the word become flesh, the

human, having cried at the tomb of his friend Lazarus, having endured the pain and sorrow of embodied existence, having been handled so tragically to the point of being wounded and bruised, knows pain and sorrow of embodied existence. He can understand the pain and sorrow of his disciples. It is only him who can properly provide consolation to his disciples at their hour of sorrow and need, for him himself has been through similar storms of life. Thomas, who once vowed, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails in his hands and my hand his side, I will not believe (John 20:25), is once again restless, till he finds the way to Christ’s new home. Once again, Thomas’s agony fails him and prevents him from seeing Jesus as the pattern of divine glory hence the way, the truth, the life, the clue to the father. Jesus asks his disciples to believe God but if not to believe also in him. There comes a time where there is no other way, when one has to believe where one cannot prove and to accept where one cannot understand. If, in the darkest hour, we believe that somehow there is a purpose in life and that the purpose is to care and love those who no one else can love and care except us, even the unbearable becomes bearable and even in the darkness there is a glimmer of life. How I wish I could have as great a faith like that of Thomas who always found it hard to accept what he could understand and to believe what he could not believe. For the love of the world and of disciples, Jesus transforms the decalogue into a new way. Jesus is the new Moses, the new Law, the one who has seen him has seen the father.

### **The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Cost of Christian Discipleship**

The understanding of Jesus as the way, the truth, and the clue, to the Father is critical as we battle with the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic. When no one knows how, when we are confronted with an enemy so massive and invisible such as Covid-19 pandemic, Jesus the way, the truth, and the clue to the Father can only become the only source of strength and encouragement on the way. If Jesus could ask his disciples to believe in the ultimate goodness of God, how much can we. For Jesus is the proof that God exists and willing to lay down his life for the world. If we believe that in Jesus, we have the glimpse of God, then, in the face of tragedy and uncertainty, it becomes not easy, but at least possible, to accept even what we cannot understand, and in the storms of life to retain a faith that is benign. Worldly homes may become hostile and unwelcoming to many, but it is not so at God’s kingdom, there are many dwellings even for those whom the world cannot take. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, what a consoling metaphor! If Jesus is the way what fear can we have? Not only he does go ahead to prepare the way for us but he is also part of our journey, he is the way and we walk on him and with him.

In the context of the present challenges as brought about by Covid-19 pandemic how glorious would be to have such leaders as Jesus who not only go ahead of us to prepare the way but also share the same journey as we do, who may also be the way the truth, and the life. At the moment we live by what our leaders share, by what President Ramaphosa and his team have to say. At the moment the President and the team not only are the way, the truth, and the life but they are also our source of strength. But they can only remain leaders as we believe in them. To say something online teaching. We are optimistic about moving into online teaching which is great. Online teaching is critical in addressing the challenges of the moment, but it cannot be traced on the expense of residential learning which is critical in the intellectual development of our students. Residential learning is critical in terms academic purposes, as it is meant spare our students from being vulnerable from many of the challenges associated with our homes and communities beyond the campus, such as poverty which make the need for social distancing and the quest for academic progress conflicting and unbearable at the moment. In this case, coronavirus helps us to appreciate the importance of residential learning and to see critically that which home schooling is able to offer and that which it cannot.

Coronavirus exposes the bleeding wounds of our democracy; it takes us across that which we avoid to face. When it comes online learning, what coronavirus teaches us is that any quest towards online learning should be mindful of the yet bleeding wounds of our society. Amen