

Fifth Sunday of Easter – 2026

Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

Have you ever felt, on the inside, like a Jenga tower that is about to fall? Have you ever had to push your emotions down beneath the surface, like pushing a beach ball under water, and you just can't keep them pushed down anymore and they come uncontrollably flying up? Some people flourish in chaos. To paraphrase Kipling, some folks can keep their head while all those around them are losing theirs. Yawning seems to be contagious. Is despair contagious? Does fear pass from man to man in the trenches? Is the converse true? Can courage be passed from woman to woman? How many of you have had a friend who seemed to be the very portrait of courage? Is Christianity, at its core, courageous? How many of you have ever thought, "if the Lord Christ is at my side, I can do anything?" I hope that you don't think that I'm full of bluster when I say that I've thought that.

Jesus and the twelve are in the Upper Room. In mere hours, the Lord will be arrested, scourged, crucified, and laid in a tomb. In the Upper Room, the disciples' heads must've been spinning. Their Master has washed their feet. He has instituted a new and better Passover. Jesus is speaking directly about His death. One of their own company will betray Him. Peter, commonly held as the strongest among them, will deny the Lord three times. It's safe to say that the impression is given that things are careening out of control. Out of control – have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt like you were drowning, forced into something that is beyond your ability to handle?

I have no idea what Jesus' voice sounded like, but I know His temperament. I know His commanding presence, the force of His persona. Imagine listening to Him directly. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. 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 to myself that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1-3). Composure, strength, assurance – the Lord speaks for the benefit of His sheep. Not platitudes; not empty emotion; not abstract optimism; Jesus anchors His encouragement in what is real. He's going ahead to prepare a place. Rooms, rooms, rooms – in His Father's house there are rooms galore and He's going ahead to prepare a place. "Let not your hearts be troubled." He said this on the night before He was *crucified*. Love would break the disciples' hearts as the travesty of human injustice seemed to deal a fatal blow to all that is good and true and worthy. A crushing sense of powerlessness would ravage their tribe. And at this very moment, the Lord calls them to faith.

"Believe in God; believe also in me." Belief implies trust. Is it easy for you to trust God when all is sunny? Do you have a grasp on the fact that God uses difficulty for our good? Most of you can see pretty well in the rear-view mirror. Most of you can see God's hands all over some difficulty that you have faced in the past, a time wherein He carried you through pain, sorrow, sickness or confusion. Are you stronger because of it? Have you thanked Him for it (for the difficulty itself)? Do you trust Him with everything that you are, everything that you have? It's not as though we are emotional Teflon. If my beloved esposa, or one of my children or

grandchildren were to be called home unexpectedly, I would be beside myself. We are vulnerable in this world. Calamity visits our houses. Our relationships are subject to fracture. Our fears are sometimes realized. And the voice of Christ slips into our ears: “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1).

Belief, trust, courage – a place is prepared for you. Almighty God is your Creator. Your heavenly Father knows precisely what you need to support this body and life. He is the author of your emotional spectrum as well as the physical needs that life demands. He opens His hand and He satisfies the desire of every living thing (Psalm 145:16). The crucified Savior tells you tenderly: “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26). What is your value? Think of what God gives you. Are you clothed and fed and housed? Who is behind that? Do you know that there are honorable men and women who serve the public good as police, to keep us safe? Who is behind that? Do you know that there are honorable men and women who devote their lives to the medical arts to see to it that we have allies, strong allies in our fight against disease? Who is behind that? Do you know that we have honorable men and women who are committed to teach, to convey knowledge that the unlearned are taught. Who is behind that? You are cared for. You are cared for in a multitude of ways because you are loved and your heavenly Father is behind it all.

He works all things together for good (Romans 8:28). God does. This world is broken. Sin is around every corner. Humans face real struggles. Our lives aren’t a game of Monopoly. We know what tragedy is not because we’ve read it in books, but because we’ve seen it with our own eyes. You want to interpret life properly? Listen to Jesus: “In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Do you know what victory looks like? Do you know what reality defines who you are and what you are and where you are going? A crucified God, a bleeding, dying, and triumphant Savior – that’s what victory looks like. He hangs from the cross to make you His own. He has prepared a place for you. His tomb is empty. Death could *not* hold Him. He is alive. He serves you with His triumph, giving you His body to eat and His blood to drink. He forgives you. He strengthens you. He blesses you and comforts you and uplifts you and befriends you. He shares His life, His triumph with you. Who or what can defeat you (Romans 8:31)? God’s Holy Spirit was given to you in baptism (Acts 2:38). Christ’s church is a divine sanctuary, the gate to heaven (Genesis 28:17). We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession (1 Peter 2:9).

Thomas was mystified. Jesus was saying things that his brain couldn’t comprehend. Thomas is so beautifully transparent. The Lord was talking about heaven. He’s going to prepare a place. Jesus took our humanity into heaven. The eternal Son of God was made man, the Word was made flesh, and He ascended bodily into heaven. His *body* prepares a place for you. His atoning sacrifice, His victory over sin and death, redeeming us with His blood – Jesus ascends into heaven, as a man, taking our humanity to the right hand of God – a place has been prepared. Jesus tells them emphatically, “And you know the way to where I am going” (John 14:4). Thomas was mystified. “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Jesus’ answer is sublime. Jesus’ answer obliterates confusion and gives focus to our faith. I AM the Way! I AM the Truth! I AM the Life! You, the saints of Christ the

King, you know Him. You know the way, the truth, and the life. He has revealed Himself to you. Faith apprehends this Savior when it is sunny and when storm clouds gather. We will fail. But He does not. He holds us perpetually. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:1-5). Christ crucified is grace. Christ risen is grace. Christ seated at the Father's right hand is grace. He has prepared a place. We are courageous.