

5TH Sunday of Easter Emmanuel May 10.20

John 14:1-14

Susan Peyton

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

Guess what, my heart is troubled. This is a very strange time, and I bet I’m not the only one who is troubled. Most of the time we hear this Gospel reading at funerals. Indeed, I think we will no longer have the “normal” life we had a few months ago. That life will pass away. This is also appropriate for all the deaths from the coronavirus. And the lack of closure, or funerals. Many of the deaths are residents in nursing homes. So many that they have to use refrigerated trucks. We heard about Lifecare Center of Kirkland, Washington, one of the first sites with a coronavirus outbreak. They have had over 37 residents die. Outside Richmond, Canterbury Rehab has probably had at least 50 deaths. And so I watched, I watched as the Virginia state map reflected the journey of the virus from east to west. I became obsessed with looking at the # of cases and how they kept growing, and coming our way. And then, then the residents and staff at Accordius in Harrisonburg started getting sick. At first, just rumors about them. The first wave of testing showed at least 85% of the residents and a third of the staff were sick. 22 residents have died there. And that hurts, for anyone who has had loved ones in a nursing home, it becomes personal. For the last three years, I have been visiting Accordius, and the other long term care facilities in four counties. I’ve talked with some of the residents who have died, and I’ve been troubled.

I have a long list of what ifs. What if someone washed their hands, what if they changed their gown between residents, what if they wore gloves, or stayed home instead coming to work when they were sick. What if they hadn’t gone on a cruise, or an airplane, or to a funeral, or to the grocery store. What if the residents had lived in a different nursing home.

And then I had a true come to Jesus moment. My college roommate called, and when she asked how I was, I said I am worried, I get wound up thinking about the care the residents in nursing homes are getting. That they wouldn’t have died if they received proper care. Cindy let me talk for a while, and then she quietly said, “It was their time to go.” And I said, no you don’t understand, we know there were shortages of gowns, and masks, and there isn’t enough staff. If they had just had enough gowns, and washed their hands, they wouldn’t have died. And again Cindy said, “it was their time to go.” And I stopped talking, and thought, she just doesn’t get it. And Cindy probably thought, she just doesn’t get it. And then, she probably prayed for me.

It took me a while, and this reading from John was just what I needed. And I realized Cindy was right, I had forgotten who was in charge.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

e all have things to learn and reflect as this pandemic changes nearly everything in our lives. Our world is not the same. But the basic truth is still with us.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

For the last 2 months, many have said, if I can't see this virus, then it certainly cannot affect or infect me. Even worse, this virus that is unseen, will not stop with infecting just one person, it has infected untold thousands. Growing up, the childhood diseases would fly thru the elementary classrooms. The point was to let us get sick, so we'd get over it, and then be immune. Unfortunately, it isn't as easy as that. Last week there were new symptoms of this virus, so we don't even know what to look for, because they are still learning about it. And in the blink of an eye, someone has died.

I hope you will indulge me for a few minutes. I thought about what would happen when I was growing up, at the dinner table if the coronavirus was present.

Friday evening, April 10th, Foster house 6 pm

Dad: Okay kids, we're eating dinner together, everyone in the kitchen

Carolyn: Dad, you remember our senior prom committee for decorations is meeting tonight. I'll get food at the meeting.

Dad: nope, you're eating at home tonight.

David: yea, I need to be somewhere.

Dad: nope, this means all of you. Help your mother

General muttering and grumbling.

Mom also passes out masks. And says everyone is expected to wear them when they leave the house.

Carolyn: Do you know what this will do to my hair? It's bad enough I can't get a haircut, this is wretched?

David: uh, no. I'm not a geek, I don't need to wear one.

Susan and Anne realize they'd better pick out the better fabric designs before Carolyn and David grab them.

Dad: your mother spent a lot of time making these masks, you will wear them, no arguing. This is very important.

David: You know, George told me this whole virus thing is a hoax. It's really a marketing ploy to tank the economy.

Anne: You do know that the Waynesboro code 18.2-422 says Susan and I can wear masks, but the rest of you can't, because you are too old ? Although I guess this would invoke the section that allows them to be worn for a medical reason or advised by a physician.

Everyone looks at Anne, rolling their eyes.

David: still not wearing a mask.

Dad can tell Mom is about to blow a gasket. Kids, you will wear them, this is a very real health hazard

Mom quietly said: do you know I had to call 10 places to find elastic? I had to drive to Dayton. And I knew I couldn't make the whole family have matching masks, so I had to buy several kinds of fabric. And yes, I remember you were all mortified when you were younger and your grandmother wore a mask downtown in Waynesboro. And let

me tell you this, if your Grandmother catches this virus because one of you wouldn't wear your mask, you're grounded for the rest of your life.

Jesus told us. Love one another. Love yourself. Keep it simple

Do not let your heart be troubled. Amen