

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
COMPASS, PA

May 7, 2023 – 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER, YR. A

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Homily: “*Make Jesus Your Foundation*”

First Lesson	Acts 7:55-60	(Stephen forgives those who are stoning him and sees Jesus)
Psalter	Psalms 31:1-5, 15-16	(We take refuge in the Lord; to Him we commend our spirit)
Second Lesson	1 Peter 2:2-10	(Having received God's mercy, we are His people)
Gospel	St. John 14:1-14	(Jesus promises a place for us in Heaven)

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From time to time, every one of us experiences fear, worry, anxiety, and despair. Since, as human beings, we are prone to fear, anxiety, worry, and despair, it's no wonder that several hundred times the Bible advises us not to worry. And Jesus says over and over, “My peace be with you.” But why do the Scriptures keep *repeating* these admonitions? Because our faith is weak, and instead of looking to God, too often we focus on our troubles. Worry first—pray later. But if we prayed instead of worrying, we'd find God sending us the help we needed, even if that assistance might not seem to be what we asked for.

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus preparing His disciples for the time when He will no longer be with them. He counsels them “Do not let your hearts 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 to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:1-3).

Upon hearing this wonderful promise from Jesus, do the disciples respond with joy and feel peace? No. Thomas is bothered because he doesn't understand where Jesus is going, and is concerned about knowing the way.

Then, when Jesus follows His promise about heaven with: “If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” *Wow!* To see and know Jesus is to see and know God?! Are the disciples thrilled and ecstatic? No. Like a real blockhead, Philip demands: “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Um, didn't Jesus just say that if Philip has seen Jesus the Son, he has seen God the Father?

So, Jesus patiently lays it out for him again: “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”

What if Jesus were to ask that question of us? Do we know Christ well enough to believe that He is God? And if so, why do we tend to focus on our problems and difficulties, instead of turning our eyes upon Jesus? We could imagine Him saying to us, “Have I been with you all this time in the Word of God in the Bible, in the Mass and the Sacraments, and still you do not know me?”

Have I been with you all this time in the faith of your community and when you pray to me, and you still do not know me? Have I been with you all this time, and when you look back over your life you can see that I sent you help when you needed it, and you still do not know me?”

If we placed Jesus more at the center of our lives, we would have less fear, worry, anxiety, and despair. Yes, we would still experience problems, trouble, aggravation, illness, and loss. God never promised that we would not go through struggles and challenges. Jesus Himself had a *big* problem; He was facing a death sentence like a common criminal. But because Jesus rose on the third day, He is with us to help us rise above our difficulties—and has the divine power to do so! This is the great good news of Easter!

And, as our second lesson stated, Jesus is the “living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight (1 Peter 2:4). A large stone or boulder is firm, steady, and immovable. Jesus, as a “living stone” is reliable and trustworthy because He remains, firm, steady, and unchanging.

A cornerstone is also the foundation of a building. And unless Jesus is the foundation of our lives, things will not go nearly as well for us. With Jesus as our foundation, we can overcome problems better and even experience peace in the midst of troubles.

Sometimes we say, “It’s impossible.”

But Jesus says in Luke 18:27, “What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.”

Sometimes we say, “I’m too tired.”

But Jesus says in Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

Sometimes we say, “Nobody loves me.”

But in Isaiah 43:4, God says, “you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you.”

Sometimes we say, “I can’t go on.”

But the Lord told Paul, and tells *us* “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Sometimes we say, “I can’t do it.”

But Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Sometimes we say, “I can’t manage.”

But Philippians 4:19 assures us: “God will fulfill all your needs in Christ Jesus as lavishly as only God can.”

Sometimes we say, “I’m afraid.”

But in Second Timothy 1:7 (MEV) we read, “For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and self-control.”

Sometimes we say, “I feel all alone.”

But in Hebrews 13:5 God says, “will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

And finally, in our Gospel today, Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me” (John 14:1)

Jesus is the answer to our troubled hearts. He is the One who promises us a place with Him in heaven—and will make it happen. He is the way to the Father—because His IS God. And Jesus is the only one who can answer our prayers.<sup>1</sup> Today’s Gospel concludes with: “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.” *How comforting is that!*

### **Let us pray:**

Dear Lord, we thank You that You are the God of the impossible. You can do anything. We want to trust in Your power and not our own. Teach us to see the difficulties and challenges in our lives from Your perspective, and not ours. Help us to focus on You and Your wisdom, goodness, and love. Trusting that You are with us wherever we go, and that You will never abandon us, give us the grace to reject fear, worry, anxiety, and discouragement. You already know the best plans for our lives. Grant us the wisdom and discernment to perceive and to do Your will for us, teaching us to walk by faith, and not by sight. And, may we rejoice always in Your promise that one day You will take us to heaven to be with You forever. All this we ask in the Name of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> *Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> Adapt. Tommy Lane, “Trust in God: Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter Year A,” 2005, [FrTommyLane.com](https://www.frtommylane.com) <[https://www.frtommylane.com/homilies/year\\_a/easter5.htm](https://www.frtommylane.com/homilies/year_a/easter5.htm)> 1 May 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Adapt. Debbie Przybylski, “A Prayer for Trusting God in Hard Times,” 2 December 2015, Intercrossors Arise International, International House of Prayer Kansas City, [Crosswalk.com](https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/a-prayer-for-trusting-god-in-hard-times.html) <<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/a-prayer-for-trusting-god-in-hard-times.html>> 1 May 2023.