

Thank you for joining us for this Sunday service, wherever you are. Today we are at Christ Episcopal Church in Clinton, Iowa, the home parish of the Reverend Raisin Horn, who is officiating today. To her and to all mothers who are listening, I say: Happy Mother's Day!

This is a Mother's Day unlike any other, just like these Sundays after Easter are unlike any we have had before. Continuing to protect ourselves and one another, we are still not gathered as we are accustomed to do. We long to be together again and experience people in person rather than on a screen. We are grieving because of that loss. Even when we do meet again we will be working through the grief we now feel.

And so as we grieve I find it a curious "God-incidence" that the Gospel reading for this morning is often heard at funerals. That's become my association with this conversation Jesus has with Thomas, his practical, literal-minded disciple. Jesus is giving his wonderful promise of going before us and preparing a place for us, and we all know the way there. A befuddled Thomas blurts out that they have no idea where Jesus is going, so how can they possibly know the way? Rather than a rebuke, Jesus gives Thomas that unforgettable declaration: *I am* the way, and the truth, and the life.

Those are comforting words, even if we wish in our desire for inclusion that Jesus stopped there. Instead, he adds: No one comes to the Father except through me. That's rather more exclusive than we like, reminding us that the gospel message always demands total commitment to the way of Jesus. This morning the reading continues and we encounter another confused disciple, Philip. He hasn't yet figured out that to see Jesus is to see God. Jesus isn't quite so patient with Philip, and mildly rebukes him.

Personally, I am always glad when the disciples don't get it. After all, these are the people who lived with Jesus, and if they couldn't always understand what he said or who he was, that gives me hope. I find it especially helpful in times like these, when we don't know what lies ahead or who to believe. Sometimes I think that one's idea of "truth" about the pandemic depends on whether one watches Fox News or MSNBC.

We are greater than our differences, however. Last week Reverend Raisin quoted Queen Elizabeth; this week I will turn to former President George W. Bush. Both are people of deep faith, speaking out of their own experience of leadership during a time of national anxiety. At the end of his short video, President Bush said this: "Let us remember how small our differences are in the face of this shared threat. In the final analysis, we are not partisan combatants. We are human beings, equally vulnerable and equally wonderful in the sight of God. We rise or fall together, and we are determined to rise."

That's an Easter message for all of us. Christ has risen, and we are determined to rise with him. Thank you again for being with us. Stay strong, stay healthy, and God bless you all.