

The disciples in today's reading are becoming anxious. Jesus has told them he's leaving, and they cannot come with him. Jesus said "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me."

They demanded to know - where are you going? Why can't we come with you? How will we know the way?

Jesus replied.

I am the way.

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

This is a concise summary - of the school of thought - of those who followed John. John's followers professed that the role of Jesus is quite simple:

Jesus came so people could

come to God,

know God, and

believe in God.

They taught that Jesus not only bestows knowledge and belief, but that he is the way to God.

Many of the early Christian sects, before they were called Christian, were actually called “Followers of The Way.”

Now, when Jesus called himself the way, or the road, he was using an image that would be familiar to anyone listening. Everyone knew what roads were.

Routes between major cities were leveled and paved with stones, carrying carts, soldiers and merchants across the Roman Empire. There were local dirt trails between hills and valleys providing ways between villages with their own streets and alleyways. And because these paths were mostly walked, images of trails and journeys were used regularly as metaphors for life. Ancient philosophers wrote about the middle path: the way, or the road, between vice and virtue.

Others taught that the way to true life, or enlightenment, could only be found on a path through nature. Teachers used images of paths being blocked, or washed away, or coming to an end, as a way to understand adversity.

But recasting this image of a road – as a person – was new. It was implying that your path is both a way through life, and that Jesus embodies the ultimate path.

John says if we wish to see, and know, and believe in God, we must walk the path of Jesus. His journey is our journey. He is the way.

If we were to follow Jesus around while he was here in the flesh, we would have seen him cutting what might seem like an impossible swath through the world. Not just because of the flashy things that we probably couldn't actually do, like

feeding thousands, changing water into wine, or raising the dead. But because of what came after. Because his actions lead to people seeing, knowing, and believing in God.

I believe those remarkable moments – the big shot miracles - were only the leading edges of the signs of God’s love that followed. The astonishing conditions made way for the simple steady roads to wholeness.

Kind of like how the glare and thrill of pyrotechnics and flash pots open a concert before the music begins, and it is the music that transforms us. Like the lightning preceding the blessings of rain falling to the earth. Or how the first screams of a child arriving into our fold cuts an unmistakable beginning.

Those signs simply carve channels for the true miracles – provisions of abundance, peace, and new life. Awareness, knowledge, and belief.

And those kinds of miracles, of abundance and resurrection, we have opportunities to do regularly, with Jesus as our way.

We transform prayers, a ball of yarn, some seeds, or a bag of rice into comfort, nourishment, and food for the multitudes. We mix water and wine together as part of a sacred feast shared by all who come forward to remember, breaking and sharing God’s life together.

We do the very hard work of stepping into a home, a hospital room, or a conversation - with others experiencing loss, death, addiction, and we hold and care for them in ways that usher in hope. New life. Next life. Resurrection.

Because we've come to God - in this place, and in our world.

Because we know God - through the lessons in these stories, and in the faces of one another. The faces of Adrianna, Will, Tino, Chuck, Daniel.

We are on the road together. Jesus is our road - Even these wooded choppy paths of our lives, where ramps get washed out and bridges are closed and the way is unclear, and even though we might be afraid, we believe that God is with us.

Jesus said "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me."

Let's pray: God we thank you for showing us the way to peace, even when it is an uneasy peace, and for life, even when it doesn't go as planned, and for encouragement, with you as our road, to walk in your way; bearing daily miracles of abundance, hope, and rebirth to this world. Amen