

HOW WILL WE KNOW THE WAY?

John 14:1-7; 18-20

April 12, 2026

I remember when I first understood that Jesus loves me. I had heard those words my whole life, but it wasn't until I was sitting in a theology class in undergrad that I finally got it, not in my head as a nice idea, but in my body as a truth I really believed.

And I was ruined. I was fully weeping in a class about the incarnation—which shows you what kind of nerd I am.

We were talking about Paul and the theme that runs through his writings of oneness with Christ. Paul understands salvation as being found in Christ. When God looks at us, God sees Jesus. And everything that is true of Christ is now true of us.

In that class my professor said, "The love God has for you is no different than the love of God the Father for God the Son."

Think about that—The love God has for you is the same love that has eternally existed within God's self. The Love God has for you is the same love that made the ocean, the rocks, every creature, the moon in all her grandeur.

And that's what did it. That's when the love of God became real for me. The love God has for each of us has nothing to do with what we succeed in, what we achieve, how strong or wise we are, but in God's freely given gift of love—unearnable and unlosable.

Imagine living fully in that love: stretching out into it, taking up space in it, making a home there. Imagine trusting that love so fully that you never question or doubt it.

This is the reality Jesus invites his disciples into.

The scripture we read this morning is pre-Easter. These words are the very beginning of what is called the Farewell Discourse in the book of John. The disciples

have just shared the last supper; Jesus has washed their feet and told them they would deny and betray him. They are still sitting at that table of betrayal when Jesus preaches this last sermon to his friends.

These are the things he most wants them to remember. And we can feel his heart pour out for them in these verses: his hopes for them, his promises to them, his desire to be with them.

Verse 20 summarizes the heart of this discourse, "one day you will know that I am in you, and you are in me." One day, you will understand that you are held in the eternal love of God.

There is something about this kind of love that we find hard to accept. Maybe because it is so unlike the love we often receive. It is a rare and special thing to find love that is truly unconditional. Even the love of parents sometimes comes with conditions or expectations. And even from our earliest years, we can absorb the belief that we are not lovable, or that our lovability depends on what we do or how we present ourselves.

Perhaps this love is hard to receive because we come from a culture of achievement. That this love is truly free and un-earnable feels preposterous. We want to add stipulations to keep others out, to prove that we have earned this, to make it more exclusive.

Or perhaps this love is hard to receive because you're in a season where everything is shifting or falling apart. It's hard enough to see God in these seasons, to understand what God is up to, let alone experience rest in God's loving care.

Maybe you're graduating from high school and get to find yourself all over again as an adult. Or maybe your kids are growing up, and you're relearning how to be a parent.

Perhaps a door has closed to something you deeply desired, or you lost something that defined your life. Maybe your body is changing, your capacity shrinking, or the diagnosis has come, the divorce, the death, the loss that shatters a future that once felt inevitable.

These moments are like thresholds, like doorways we pass through and find we cannot go back. Our world has changed forever. We are troubled. We are anxious. We want answers.

The disciples are at a threshold not unlike this. It is hard to see from our post-Easter perspective, but what they are experiencing at this moment feels cataclysmic to them. It's the slowly dawning realization that the future they had hoped for is not the one they'll get. Their grand hopes for this Messiah are about to be nailed to the cross.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled." These words break into their crisis.

"You believe in God, believe in me, too. In my Father's house are many rooms, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and get you. But you know the way to the place I am going."

In their disorientation and anxiety, they were hoping for something more helpful, more concrete. Thomas speaks for all of us: "Lord, we don't know where you're going. We don't know what you're talking about! Show us the way."

They don't get the answer they're looking for. Jesus doesn't give them a map. Instead, he gives them himself. "I am the way. If you know me, you already know God. If you've seen me, you've seen God. If you're in me, you're already in God."

This doesn't feel like the answer to the questions we might ask when we're at these threshold moments, questions like, "what should I do now?" "Where should I go?" "How can I possibly move forward?" But this is the answer that we're given.

There are no directions here, but there is a location: IN.

This located-ness, this in-ness, is the thread that runs through this whole Farewell Discourse. In the

next chapter, Jesus repeats again and again the word "Remain." "I am the vine, you are the branches. Remain in me. Remain in my love."

The last Sermon Jesus gives to his friends is not full of precise instructions on perfect living, it is not a map to heaven. It is a proclamation of their location. They are IN Christ.

This is the answer we actually need when our world falls apart.

You are already held—before you knew it, before you knew you needed it. Room has already been made for you in the heart of God.

Being in Christ is not something we discover by deft maneuvering or tightly held itineraries. It is a state we are brought into. Jesus is the doer. He is the one who takes us into Godself. The work for us is not discovering this state but remaining in it—trusting the love that already holds us, that holds everything.

We do not have to strive for this; we must abide in it. We cannot reach it; we must remain in it.

Jesus says we know the way to the place where he is going—and I think that's kind of funny. Because, of course, we know the way to the place we already reside. Of course, we can't get lost when we are IN Christ, The Way himself.

The stability of this location is not shaken by our failure.

The reach of God's heart does not stop at the threshold.

The promise of this love is not contingent on our grasping it.

Though we often think of our lives as journeys *to* God, they are really journeys within the love that has held us since before the world began.

I'm reminded of the labyrinth—that ancient Christian prayer practice of walking a winding path to an inevitable center. Though it looks like a maze, the labyrinth different than a maze, because you can't get lost. We have one right by the North Parking Lot. You should check it out. Walking the labyrinth is a simple

invitation to notice the presence of God which is already there.

The last time I walked the labyrinth, it felt a little silly at first. I felt like I was trying to conjure something up. As I kept going, I began to feel like the winding path of the labyrinth was a little bit like my life. At points on the labyrinth path, you feel close to the center—like “I’m almost there, I’ve got this figured out”—then the path turns, and you feel farther away than when you started. I got a little frustrated and found myself anxiously rushing—like I was being graded on the speed and accuracy of my walking.

In the end, when I came to the center, I laughed at myself. Obviously, it wasn’t about my speed or precision. I was in the labyrinth. I couldn’t get lost. All that winding was leading me to the center.

Friends, we are in the Labyrinth. You are IN Christ, at the center of God’s loving heart.

But if your heart is troubled, if rest evades you, and trust in God’s love is hard to come by, hear this promise: you will dwell in the center of God’s love forever—you will know that childlike rest in the arms of a God who has prepared a place for you, who will not let you go. My prayer is that it might be for you on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.