



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

2400 Eighth Avenue West • Seattle, Washington 98119

206.284.1960 • www.queenannelutheran.org

✘ *Staff* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Daniel Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Children's Ministry Coordinator	Terry Anderson
Parish Administrator	Barbara Bash
Sexton	John Bryant
Lutheran Counseling Network	Sarah Tatterson

✘ *In Worship Today* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Daniel Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector	Jacqui Darroch

This service of worship can also be heard online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find both audio and print resources for worship at home.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 10, 2020

"Word Out #10" audio transcript

Prelude

Trio on LITTLE FLOCK
(Have No Fear, Little Flock, ELW 764)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this fifth Sunday of Easter. Wherever you are listening, we invite you into this space: one where we will hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung, a time where you can be still and know God is God.

P: As we continue to celebrate the fifty days of Easter, today's Gospel includes Jesus' promise that he goes to prepare a place for his followers in his "Father's house," as well as his famous statement, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." How do we make sense of these claims, and how might they inspire us to bear witness to the risen Christ in our words and deeds?


Greeting


P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.


G: And also with you.

Gospel Acclamation


John 14:6


G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Repeat alleluia

P: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."

G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel

John 14:1-14

A: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the fourteenth chapter.

G: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In 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? ³And 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. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “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’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

G: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

The Mandalorian vs. the Nazorean
Pastor Dan Peterson

It’s the mantra of a warrior tribe, a small band of men and women whose race has otherwise presumably been eradicated. Its creed, at least what we know of it,

is sparse: protect your fellow warriors, keep out of sight as much as possible, and never, ever, under any circumstances remove your helmet.

Wookipedia calls it “The Way of the Mandalorian.” Its followers repeat its mantra frequently. “This,” they say in baritone unison, “is the Way.”

“This is the Way.” The fictional warrior tribe, featuring one of their own as the star, appears on Disney’s new television series, *The Mandalorian*. *The Mandalorian* belongs to the Star Wars universe. It takes place after *Return of the Jedi* where rebel forces led by Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, and Han Solo, among others, overthrow the Galactic Empire and destroy its most powerful weapon – the Death Star. The details here matter little. The mantra, on the other hand, matters a lot!

“This is the Way.”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus uses strikingly similar language. It appears as the first part of a long, three-chapter farewell address. Jesus has just shared the news that his time with the disciples is concluding. Soon he will depart. Thomas, completely in the dark, asks in response where he is going and how to get there. Jesus replies, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Now if I were one of the disciples, I would be confused! Perhaps you would be too. How can a person be the Way?

Fortunately, there are some exceptional explanations of John 14:6 in the scholarly literature. Robert Gundry, for example, observes that “in Christ the believer has the ‘way’ leading into the Father’s presence, the ‘truth’ revealing the Father’s inmost character, and the ‘life’ infusing into the believer the Father’s very nature” (“In my Father’s House are Many Mov’i,” *ZNW*, p. 68). Each of these, Gundry points out, belong to the present spiritual experience of the Christian. They are available to us here and now!

J. Lanier Burns of Dallas Theological Seminary, to offer a second explanation, talks about the sharp contrast between this stage of Jesus’ ministry and his last. “‘The Way,’ he writes, “was about to be glorified through the despised cross; ‘the Truth’ was about to be condemned by his own people and family; and ‘the Life’

was about to be a battered corpse in a dark tomb. In the 'Way of Christ,' the 'way' of the church will follow with persecution, hostility, martyrdom, and complete victory in him" ("John 14:1-27: The Comfort of God's Presence," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 172, p. 305).

What a powerful set of explanations: the Way as a path to the presence of God through a person, a path that may take believers *through* suffering, persecution, and death to victory, resurrection, and new life, just as it did the Christ.

Yet as powerful as these two explanations are, I confess that John 14:6 still puzzles me. What, I wonder, is the Way?

Jesus makes it difficult to answer the question in John. We know that it leads, as he says in John 10:10, to "abundant life." We know Jesus is the gate (John 10:9), that it leads through him, the Good Shepherd; indeed, whoever enters by him will be saved and find pasture. Those who don't, followers at the time of false messiahs or violent revolutionaries like Judas of Galilee or Theudas (see Acts 5:33-39), will be abandoned by their leaders, scattered, and in some cases slaughtered by the Roman Empire.

We can affirm accordingly at least a few things about the Way: it's through Jesus, it's non-violent, and it leads people to greater life, particularly as they dwell in what one commentator calls the "resting places" of God. But that's about all we have in John. The Way, it would seem, belongs to the realm of private experience and cannot otherwise be explained.

John, however, is not the only book in the New Testament that mentions the Way. The term appears some seven times in the Book of Acts. It's a label the early Christians used to describe themselves, one with parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls and roots in the Hebrew Bible going all the back to Deuteronomy. Acts provides us with additional clues concerning how early Christians understood the term.

Consider Acts 18:24-26. This passage shows us that the Way is more than a personal experience we can't explain using the intellect, language, or reason. Instead, the Way has *content* we can communicate and teach! Listen closely: "Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He

was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been *instructed* in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.”

So far, so good.

The story continues: “He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and *explained* the Way of God to him more accurately” (emphasis mine). Did you hear what I emphasized? Apollos had been instructed in the Way, and Priscilla and Aquila explained the meaning of the Way! That means the Way can, in fact, be apprehended intellectually, and several lines later (v. 28) we learn that integral to the Way was accepting *Jesus as the Messiah* and showing it from Scripture – not just endorsing the baptism of repentance practiced by John.

Unfortunately, everything Priscilla and Aquila (see Romans 16:3-4 for their significance) taught Apollos is left unsaid, so we must look elsewhere in Acts for clues regarding what the Way is. Acts 24:14-15 offers a couple.

In Acts 24 Paul appears on trial before Felix, a regional governor of the Roman Empire. He insists he is innocent of being an “agitator” (v. 5), that is, of fomenting rebellion. “But this I admit to you,” he tells Felix, “that according to the Way, which they [the Jews] call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law [or conformable to the law] or written in the prophets. I have hope in God – a hope that they themselves also accept – that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Notice here three things. First, Paul distinguishes the Way from a mere sect (i.e., a school or a party, including groups like the Pharisees and Sadducees). Instead, as Adele Reinhartz points out, the Way “seems to reflect Paul’s understanding of Christianity as the one, true way of God, rather than a particular or exclusive school or community” (*The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, p. 272).

Secondly, Paul emphasizes continuity with the Jewish biblical tradition. “I worship the God of our ancestors,” he says.

Thirdly, Paul endorses the Jewish, in this case, Pharisaical belief in the resurrection going back to Daniel 12:1-4, a topic we just began exploring in our Wednesday evening Zoom forum series. He does this to evade charges not only that he was violating proper religious practice but also that he was heretical when it came to his beliefs.

The *Interpreters One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* consolidates it beautifully: “Rather than being the leader of a heretical sect, Paul is a follower of the Way – the culmination of true Judaism. Although actually Paul did not believe everything in the law and prophets (cf. Galatians 3:25; Romans 10:4), Luke [the author of Acts] sees Christianity as fulfillment of the Old Testament (cf. Luke 24:44). This is seen in the hope of a resurrection, which is common to Paul and the best of Judaism (cf. 23:6-9).

We could, of course, see Christianity as Israel’s replacement. Many Christians do. But the final words of our commentary here suggest otherwise: the Way, whatever it is, brings out what is *already present* in Judaism and affirms it. Hence what Paul affirms reflects “the best of Judaism,” not its completion but its confirmation. The two are equal.

So, what finally is the Way of Christ?

It is, first, a path, here through Jesus, to a spiritually intimate or personal relationship with God.

It is, second, non-violent and leads to abundant life.

It is, third, consistent with biblical (Jewish) tradition, which means it includes following the commandments, one of which is not to kill. Isaiah 48:17-18 makes this clear: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you for your own good, *who leads you in the way you should go*. O that you had paid attention to my commandments!”

It affirms, fourth, the cornerstone of the good news and the ultimate expression of abundant life, namely, belief in the resurrection.

Fifth and finally, while it includes one’s personal relationship with God, it’s communal; the resurrection is communal, and the Way itself is linked with the Kingdom of God according to Acts 19:8-9.

This, I submit, is the Way – not the Way of the Mandalorian, which, however exciting, (and it is) involves excessive violence and *doesn't* lead to life. It is, rather, the Way of the Nazorean.

The Nazorean invites us to dwell through Him in the resting places of God, to speak peace to a culture in conflict, to follow Him as the Good Shepherd, to observe the commandments, to look out for our friends, to look out for strangers, to look out, as He did, even for our enemies.

This is the Way, the Way to rest and peace, to a glimpse of Eternal Life even in the here and now that Jesus embodies, pioneers, perfects, and promises.

May it be your way and mine.

Amen.

Hymn of the Day

Have No Fear, Little Flock ELW 764



1 Have no fear, lit - tle flock; have no fear, lit - tle
 2 Have good cheer, lit - tle flock; have good cheer, lit - tle
 3 Praise the Lord high a - bove; praise the Lord high a -
 4 Thank - ful hearts raise to God; thank - ful hearts raise to



flock, for the Fa - ther has cho - sen to
 flock, for the Fa - ther will keep you in
 bove, for he stoops down to heal you, up -
 God, for he stays close be - side you, in



give you the king - dom; have no fear, lit - tle flock!
 his love for - ev - er; have good cheer, lit - tle flock!
 lift and re - store you; praise the Lord high a - bove!
 all things works with you; thank - ful hearts raise to God!

Prayers of the Church

P: Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

P: Build us up, mothering God, as living stones united in your spiritual house. Continually strengthen your church as it is sent forth to proclaim your love. We pray especially for new congregations and those in redevelopment. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: Humble us, creator God, as part of your creation. Fill us with respect and awe for the world you have made, including volcanoes, ocean currents, tropical rainstorms, glaciers, and other forces that both destroy and, more importantly, create. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: Align our ways to your love, O God. We pray for countries, leaders, and other organizations as they prepare places for those seeking refuge and safety. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: God of healing and rest, help those whose hearts are heavy and weighed down by many troubles. Comfort their suffering, ease their distress, and carry their burdens. We pray especially for those who are affected by COVID-19. We pray for health care workers and those they are treating. Be with them. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: Nurturing God, we pray for those who tend and teach young children, for the safe pregnancies of expectant parents, and for families who struggle with infertility and miscarriage. We give thanks for all who have shown mothering care, and we remember all for whom this day is difficult. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: For who else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

P: Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Generous God, you call into your brilliant light all who have died. Give us faith to take hold of the promise of your eternal life. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: **Our Father in heaven,**

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,

now and forever.

Amen.

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

C: **Amen.**

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

At Easter-Tide (from *Six Occasional Preludes*, Op. 182, No.3)
Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924)