

*P Christ is risen!*  
*C He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

At the beginning of John's Gospel, we hear of a very close relationship between the Son and God. John opens the Gospel with these beautiful words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

A few verses later we hear of this unique relationship again:

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. (John 1:18)

Throughout this Gospel that is before us today, Jesus is constantly revealing himself to us and we know in this Gospel according to John that what Jesus reveals about himself, he is actually revealing God to us. It is Jesus who makes God known, not the law or the piety of the Sadducees, the Pharisees, or the intellect of the scribes or the self-righteousness we veil ourselves in with our assumptions. It is Jesus alone who reveals God to us...not because we have chosen to experience God for ourselves, rather because God chose to reveal Himself to us through Jesus Christ. And now in the Gospel lesson that is before us today, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his imminent departure but not before he teaches them and us today, about the relationship that we share with the Father because of the nature and the character of the relationship *He* shares with the Father. It's as if he were explaining the first chapter of this Gospel to his disciples and encouraging them and us to discern this relationship and how it includes and works for all the children of God, even in his physical absence.

The words of our Gospel lesson before us today are very familiar. These words are familiar because we often hear this passage read at funerals...

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> 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? (John 14:1-2)

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What follows in our lesson today and within the next few chapters of this Gospel is what is known as the Farewell Discourse. This discourse is an intimate sermon Jesus shares with his disciples in the face of his impending death. It focuses on comforting his followers with the promise that the Holy Spirit will be with them and all those to come. Jesus, in this discourse, is teaching the disciples and us of an abiding unity and love we all share with Him and God...and each other. But this does not really surface if we sentimentally regard these dwelling places as a destination for the deceased. But as I said, yes this is a great comfort in the context of the death of a loved one, however, Jesus is telling us of these dwelling places or these rooms in the context of *his* impending death and what they mean for us right now after Jesus has departed and we live our lives absent of his physical presence.

Within the Gospel lesson today and throughout the discourse, we can hear Jesus comforting and strengthening the disciples with reassuring words upon His departure as well as words of encouragement in the face of the suffering that awaits them in a world without Jesus directly teaching and guiding them.

But there is more to the words and Luther comments on these words from Jesus’ sermon in his commentary on this text:

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From the beginning and throughout the Gospel of John we hear that God abides in Christ, and Christ abides in God. We hear today how Christ abides in our lives and we abide in Christ who abides in God. The word that Jesus is using here that is being translated as a noun to mean “dwelling place” is perhaps better understood when it is related to the verb abide. To abide means to be related to another or to be *in* relationship with another. And in the context of the Farewell Discourse, it opens our hearts and our minds to see Good News not just in a physical destination, but rather, we abide through the personal relationship we are in with God through Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Listen again to what Jesus is saying to us in our Gospel lesson today:

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The rooms or the dwelling places Jesus speaks of are not necessarily a place but a relationship. And we abide in the Father’s heart through the relationship we have with Jesus. A relationship is not a destination, rather it is an ongoing presence that we are in through Jesus. Jesus says in today’s Gospel that he is the way to God. Jesus is the way to God because Jesus is one with God. That means not only that Jesus is our way to God but also that Jesus is God’s way to us. That means that when we look at Jesus and see his abundant unrestrained love, his infinite compassion for the downtrodden, the sick, and for sinners, then we see God. When we gather around this table and

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This is the Good News for us all today, we dwell in that place that passed all understanding that is in Christ Jesus, the one who is risen, He is risen indeed, alleluia!

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*P Christ is risen!*  
*C He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

At the beginning of John's Gospel, we hear of a very close relationship between the Son and God. John opens the Gospel with these beautiful words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

A few verses later we hear of this unique relationship again:

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. (John 1:18)

Throughout this Gospel that is before us today, Jesus is constantly revealing himself to us and we know in this Gospel according to John that what Jesus reveals about himself, he is actually revealing God to us. It is Jesus who makes God known, not the law or the piety of the Sadducees, the Pharisees, or the intellect of the scribes or the self-righteousness we veil ourselves in with our assumptions. It is Jesus alone who reveals God to us...not because we have chosen to experience God for ourselves, rather because God chose to reveal Himself to us through Jesus Christ. And now in the Gospel lesson that is before us today, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his imminent departure but not before he teaches them and us today, about the relationship that we share with the Father because of the nature and the character of the relationship *He* shares with the Father. It's as if he were explaining the first chapter of this Gospel to his disciples and encouraging them and us to discern this relationship and how it includes and works for all the children of God, even in his physical absence.

The words of our Gospel lesson before us today are very familiar. These words are familiar because we often hear this passage read at funerals...

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> 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? (John 14:1-2)

In the setting of a funeral and the heart wrenching pain of loss that permeates a funeral, this passage offers comfort and assurance that a deceased loved one is safe in a dwelling place, a room, or even a mansion with God. And in this context, that's all we really want to know or even need to know about this passage. However, in the context of our everyday lives and in the context of our worship setting today, we have the opportunity to look at this passage in a different light with a closer and deeper discernment.

As we then discern this passage perhaps, we may ask ourselves about this dwelling place. A dwelling place, a room, or even a mansion with God is nice when I die, but what about our situation

right now as we live our lives? What does this dwelling place mean right now...especially this room or mansion beyond this world? Is God just a huge tenement building? Does this not simply affirm our child-like image of heaven as a place “up there” or “out there” seemingly to leaving us isolated from God in this life right now? What is the significance or the implication of that dwelling place right now?

Just prior to this morning’s Gospel lesson, from chapter 14 of John’s Gospel, Jesus gathers with his disciples, tells them that he is with them only a little longer and then he prepares them for his departure. In the face of their probable anxiety and even with Peter being told of his denial, Jesus shares very intimate words of discourse or a sermon, if you will, with them.

What follows in our lesson today and within the next few chapters of this Gospel is what is known as the Farewell Discourse. This discourse is an intimate sermon Jesus shares with his disciples in the face of his impending death. It focuses on comforting his followers with the promise that the Holy Spirit will be with them and all those to come. Jesus, in this discourse, is teaching the disciples and us of an abiding unity and love we all share with Him and God...and each other. But this does not really surface if we sentimentally regard these dwelling places as a destination for the deceased. But as I said, yes this is a great comfort in the context of the death of a loved one, however, Jesus is telling us of these dwelling places or these rooms in the context of *his* impending death and what they mean for us right now after Jesus has departed and we live our lives absent of his physical presence.

Within the Gospel lesson today and throughout the discourse, we can hear Jesus comforting and strengthening the disciples with reassuring words upon His departure as well as words of encouragement in the face of the suffering that awaits them in a world without Jesus directly teaching and guiding them.

But there is more to the words and Luther comments on these words from Jesus’ sermon in his commentary on this text:

This sermon contains the most precious and cheering consolation, the sweetest words of Christ, the faithful and beloved Savior, words of farewell to His disciples as he is about to leave them, words such as no (one) on earth is able to employ toward (their) dearest and best friends. They show how He (Jesus) provides for them out of the pure, ineffable, burning love of His heart, and how He is concerned about them far more sincerely than any (one) is about the greatest need and danger of (their) most intimate friend.<sup>1</sup>

Luther is reminding us that the words within this discourse of Jesus are precious and heartfelt and not like the empty and hollow words that get thrown about the media today that only get retracted or disregarded because they are insincere, meaningless, divisive, and unnecessary. However, the key to what Jesus is saying to us today can be a bit puzzling in our language. The word Jesus uses for “dwelling place” or “room” as it is translated at times, only appears in John’s Gospel and therefore it has to be understood then in John’s context, or rather, how John uses the word.

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<sup>1</sup> Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Luther’s Works Volume 24, Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 14 - 16*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961. This paragraph is not a direct quote but phrases, thoughts, and perspective are from the Preface on page 7. Parenthetical words: “one,” “their,” and “all” replace the male references “man,” “his” and “men”.

John most often relates the Greek word for room or dwelling place, a noun, to the verb that is translated as abide. In other words, John means to physically abide somewhere...to live somewhere and not the dwelling place or room itself. For instance, the word is used when John says that Jesus “dwells” (abides) for a time in the Samaritan village after meeting the woman at the well. And Jesus is using it here again today in our Gospel lesson to speak of our relationship with God and with Christ and not of a destination. In other words, we abide with God or we dwell with God...God is not where we live.

From the beginning and throughout the Gospel of John we hear that God abides in Christ, and Christ abides in God. We hear today how Christ abides in our lives and we abide in Christ who abides in God. The word that Jesus is using here that is being translated as a noun to mean “dwelling place” is perhaps better understood when it is related to the verb abide. To abide means to be related to another or to be *in* relationship with another. And in the context of the Farewell Discourse, it opens our hearts and our minds to see Good News not just in a physical destination, but rather, we abide through the personal relationship we are in with God through Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Listen again to what Jesus is saying to us in our Gospel lesson today:

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:6-7)

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