



Easter 5, Year A – May 22, 2011

John 14.1-14 & 1 Peter 2.2-10

A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

This week has had a bit of a theme running through my conversations with different people, people who have never met one another. These conversations seem to echo one particular topic – waiting. When I mentioned this to a friend of mine she reminded me that there are no themes, no coincidences, only God.

So here we go.

We've all been in that place, that waiting place. Waiting for the phone to ring, waiting for the five year plan to arrive or waiting for inspiration. We become distracted by our own impatience, particularly in this microwave, convection oven, cell phone, instant messaging, Google search world. And when we are waiting we awake every day to find that our life looks much like it did the day before so we go out into the world, dejected that the answer, the clarity, the offer did not come.

In that state, that state of impatient waiting, I believe that we might miss something amazing right in our path. I think that when our world isn't suddenly changed and we are faced with the drudgery of getting through one more day, our eyes become clouded with disappointment and we forget...

We forget that God, through Jesus, has promised us a place with him and that he is the way.

We forget that we, like Philip and Thomas, can ask God the hard questions.

We forget that we, that we, according to Peter, are living stones and are part of a holy priesthood.

In Jesus' farewell discourse in the Gospel of John, while sitting in an upper room, he tells his disciples that they will betray him and that he will be put to death. And after telling them that he says, do not let your hearts be troubled. What? Are you kidding? Jesus has just pulled the plug on every hope they've ever had and he tells them to not be upset? Surely he jests.

Then Philip, lovely Philip, asks Jesus the hard questions. OK Jesus, we'll believe everything if you just show us what God looks like. A question that we've all asked since the beginning of questions; what does God look like? Imagine the collective gasp from the rest in the room because someone has dared to ask out loud what the others were only thinking in their heads.

And Jesus doesn't lose his temper. He doesn't say you're an idiot for asking. He says God looks like me, and when I go away I will prepare a place for you and you'll follow me one day.

But Jesus, we do not know the way! The disciples, in a very human way, were asking the question that I've been hearing all week. Thomas was asking for a road map, please. I'd like the plans that you have for my life for the next 10 years delivered to my home in triplicate, preferably by Federal Express. Please, because this place of not knowing is too frustrating to wait, I need to know now.

And Jesus says, I am the way.

How frustrating!

All that Thomas wanted was a clear answer, a once and for all answer and instead he hears, yet again, something that he cannot understand.

Sound familiar? I'm sure that we've all at some time in our lives asked God the hard questions and someone has pointed us back to scripture saying something like, it is not for us to know. In our darkest times this seems like little comfort.

Yesterday, the world didn't end, so I spent it in the garden. For those of you who don't know me well you might be asking, what's the big deal about gardening?

The deal is that I don't nor have I ever, gardened. That was the exclusive purview of my mother. No matter where I lived my mom always came with her

spade, trowel and flowered gardening gloves and transformed a plot of soil into a glorious symphony of colour.

But she can no longer bend to pull the weeds or manage clippers to prune the growth. So it is a bitter sweet task that I undertake, pulling the weeds, tilling the soil and deciding what to plant. I do so to honour her, to carry on something that she so enjoyed, so that she can come and visit and take pleasure in the product of someone else's labour.

You see, for all of those years that I stood to the side, apparently I was paying attention. I know what to pull, what to prune and where to plant. If you'd asked me a year ago whether I knew all of those things I would have said no. Now that the task has fallen to me I've found that without my knowing, I've been paying attention.

There is nothing that I clean, nor that I cook, nor that I plant that does not have its origin in my mother's gentle guidance. More importantly, there is nothing that I believe, nor that I know to be true, nor that I pray that does not come from the fruit of her faith. Because just as Peter tells his followers, she is my living stone, my connection to something solid and true. And for both of us, because of her, Jesus is our chief cornerstone.

This building, these beautiful bricks and mortar, is not, perhaps, what Jesus had in mind. We build, we beautify to honour him to be sure, but we, this community of Christ Church, surely in these times of stories of floods and fires, we are even more grateful for our bounty. But if this building were gone tomorrow, we would still be Christ Church. We would still be a loving community created and sustained by our faith. We would still be, as Peter says, God's own people, a royal priesthood who are called to spread the message of God's love.

And it would, is, and hopefully always will be, the community to which we turn to know Jesus and follow him along the way. We would continue to turn to one another and create a safe enough community that we, like Philip and Thomas, can ask the hard questions like what does God look like. Christ Church would continue to be our corner stone within a community of living stones. And most of all, just as my mother has always been for me, we would continue to become the cornerstone for someone else in our lives.

I can almost hear the collective gasp. Yes, I'm talking to you.

For those of you who are waiting, waiting for the phone to ring, for the clearly laid out ten year plan to arrive or waiting simply for inspiration, do not get lost in that place. Do not become so blind in that darkness that you do not see.

See that for someone your faith is indeed the map they need to find a relationship with God.

See that for someone you are the one with whom they are safe enough to ask the hard questions of.

See that for someone, you are the living stone to whom they turn when they need to be grounded.

See that, just as I silently watched my mother and learned, that for someone, you are the one to whom they pay attention, even if it doesn't seem like it.

As you leave here today, this building of bricks and mortar, remember that you are the Church, we are the Church whether you're here for the first time or whether you've been coming here all of your life. And see that for someone you may very well be one of their cornerstones.

In this life there is no waiting, there is only the way found in Christ. In this life there is no darkness because light is always there should you choose to see. In this life there are no coincidences, there is only God.

And for making us each a living stone in the household of God, thanks be to God.