

Sermon
May 10, 2020

When I was in college, my family and I visited Beijing, China and one of the things we wanted to visit was the Great Wall of China. I was so excited. We were in Beijing, China and we were going to walk on the Great Wall of China. The GREAT WALL of China. And on top of that, it was Christmas. I never thought I would ever be able to say, "I walked on the Great Wall of China." Yes, I was excited.

Through the hotel where we were staying, we arranged to have a driver drive us to the Great Wall. Because of the language difference, there was some repeating of phrases, each time a little slower and deliberate, "We would like to go to the Great Wall. Can we get a driver to take us?" The response we got was the response we had hoped for, at least at the moment, "No problem. Trust me. Driver take you to Great Wall." YES! Simple and to the point. We were set to go. And so, on Christmas, we all got ready and at the designated time, we went down to the entrance of the hotel and our driver was waiting for us. We verified with the driver, "You take us to the Great Wall?" And then the same response that we had hoped for was shared, "No problem. Trust me. I take you to Great Wall."

YES! We all piled into the car with building anticipation and excitement. We are going to the Great Wall. Once we all piled in, the driver started the car and we were off. I had visions of what it was going to be like. I don't even remember the scenery outside my window. Only visions of the Great Wall filled my thoughts.

Then, a short while later, the driver drove into the parking lot of tall building. A little confused, we asked, again, "You take us to Great Wall?" Again, "No problem. Trust me. I take you to Great Wall." He got out of the car and we started to wonder if he was getting directions or something else. I mean, it's the GREAT WALL of China, the largest man-made structure in the WORLD. How hard could it be to find the GREAT WALL of China?!?! The driver then opened our doors and said, "Great Wall." Ummm...No, I'm pretty sure, this was definitely NOT the Great Wall. We asked, "We go to Great Wall?" "No problem. Trust me. Great Wall." And with his words he motioned to the sign above the entrance to the tall building, "Great Wall...HOTEL." Needless to say, from that time on, whenever I hear someone respond with, "No problem Trust me," I immediately become a little nervous and skeptical.

Now, back to Jesus. Jesus has just shared with the disciples that he was heading to the cross to die, he's shared a meal with them and he's washed their feet. And now, these words, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust God and trust me." Sounds a lot like, "No problem. Trust me," to me. Then Jesus continues, "I'm going to prepare a place for you...And you know the way to the place that I am going." Then Thomas sounds a lot like we did in China that Christmas long ago, "Ummm, we don't know the way or the place that you are going." I'm wondering if the disciples had similar faces as we did when we pulled into the Great Wall Hotel: certain confusion and building concern.

Here's the thing, the disciples had a dwelling place like a building or some other location somewhere "out there," in mind. Then Jesus responds, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Jesus isn't talking about some place out there, at all. He's talking about a relationship with God, with Jesus.

All along, Jesus was journeying with the disciples while he fed the hungry, cared for the poor and outcast, healed the sick, fed them and washed their feet. And now, in response to the question, "How can we know the way to where you are going?," Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

This is what Jesus has been and continues to prepare for the disciples and for you and me, is life with God, with Jesus, right here and right now. No the place that Jesus is preparing is not some place out there, away from them or away from us. Jesus, is preparing the disciples for life with God, the creator of all life, a life of selfless service, hope, love of neighbor, reconciliation right where they are, right where we are right now. This is the way, the truth and the life.

And this life, this God, Jesus, you can trust. You see, Jesus, the way the truth and the life, has returned, even from death, just as he said. This is the promised resurrection, here and now. Jesus has returned to dwell with us and us with him. This is the way, the truth and the life that Jesus continues to prepare for us. And we know that way as we care for the poor, feed the hungry, care for those without homes and offer compassion to those in fear.

Holy Shepherd, God dwells with you and you with God, right where you're at, right now. Live the life that Jesus is showing and dwelling within. And, we will know the Promised Resurrection, here and now. Thanks be to God.