Easter 5A: Genesis 8: 1-19; Acts 7: 55-end; John 14: 1-14

**May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Here’s another Do not be afraid moment. I am the way. And the truth. And the life. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

A friend of mine, when we were talking about this passage, said: if scripture were desserts, some passages would be jelly, some would be pavlova (I’m not personally clear what pavlova scripture looks like, but …) and this one we have just heard would be fruitcake, dense and full and rich.

Here is Jesus once more talking to his disciples. He is preparing them for the fact that he is going away, and that makes them anxious. He tries to explain in terms of going to his Father’s house. Now the only other time he has used the term ‘my Father’s house’ was back in chapter 2 of this gospel, at the beginning of his ministry. There’s the water into wine story and that is followed immediately by the story of Jesus going into the temple in Jerusalem and driving out all the traders and the money-changers, saying: do not make my Father’s house a house of trade. The temple was the place, if you like, where – as Tom Wright put it – heaven and earth met.

So this use of ‘my Father’s house’ is not so far away from that. The meeting of things earthly and things heavenly. Jesus wants to reassure the disciples that, although he will be leaving them, it will be for their ultimate benefit. When I lived in Germany, many years ago, one of the lodgers in the place where I lived was an Italian man in his fifties, who had spent years living as cheaply as possible and going home to a family he clearly loved very much only for holidays, because he could earn so much more in Germany that he could send home to his wife and children. I wonder what it took to convince them that his going away was a good thing.

But this is Jesus, so the conversation is rather different. He wants them to know that he is not going to forget them or abandon them. Thomas is classic again: remember the ‘I won’t believe he has risen unless I can actually touch him and stick my finger in the nail marks..’. Here he says: we have no idea where you are going so how can we possibly know the way. **And Jesus says: I am the way.** But what does that mean? Unless we unpick it, it seems a bit trite; glib even.

And then Philip chips in, and says: Lord, show us the Father – show us who this house belongs to – and we will be satisfied. Are we ever really? There was an article in the weekend newspaper magazine yesterday about some woman who started her working life as a gofer behind the scenes at Top of the Pops, and she said essentially that some of the stars of the era turned to drugs and drink because they thought they would be satisfied by fame and money and all the trappings, but they found they weren’t, and their living got more and more extreme in their efforts to find real happiness.

At least Philip, we feel, stood a chance of realising that real happiness isn’t invested in the things of this world, but Jesus makes some valid points: you’ve been hanging out with me for a long time now; do you still not know who I am? And if you don’t believe me when I tell you that the Father and I are one, then at least you could look at what I have done and am doing, and believe it because of those things.

The proof of all sorts of things is apparent to us even if we cannot see the things themselves. Lots of important stuff is invisible. But it doesn’t mean it is not there. Coronavirus is here among us. So is love, personality, relationships, the wind, creativity. We see the symptoms of these things – the evidence they exist – but not the things themselves.

So Jesus says: whoever has seen me has seen the Father. The Greek word used for seeing at this point is not the usual physical seeing with the eyes, but more the eureka-type seeing. The: now I get it-type seeing. Johns’ gospel uses it a lot. Seeing is the dawning, the realisation, the inner eye, the understanding.

Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury back in the sixties, said: all we need to know about God, we see in Jesus. And Jesus is sort of saying here: you don’t need to wrestle with the huge questions about who God is; this is it; I am he.

Jesus is our access to the nature of God; to the very truth of who God is. What we see in Jesus is what we can know about God.

Michael Ramsey also said: God is Christ-like, and in God there is no unChristlikeness at all.

‘I am the way and the truth and the life’ seems to cover it.

So in practical terms, what does it mean to know the Father by what we know of Jesus? Love, actually. Obviously. 😊

I was put in mind of the St Peter’s School values – which we still refer to alongside the school vision. What is Jesus like? Well there’s gratitude (he took the cup and only after he had given thanks did he share it), thoughtfulness (feeding the five thousand), respect (for his earthly parents – see Luke’s gospel just after they lost him in Jerusalem), politeness (I’m less sure about this one, because politeness is a social construct – but we can say that he was gentle with those who were hurting and tough with those who needed to hear it), confidence (he knew who he was), forgiveness (always and everywhere – even when his best friends denied him), humility (thy will be done), honesty (the Samaritan woman at the well), friendship (Mary, Martha and Lazarus), and trustworthiness (another always and everywhere).

If we have seen Jesus – in Scripture and in the faces of people around us – in acts of love and service – in the poor and the homeless, the refugee and the prisoner – we have seen God the Father. And if we have found the way to God, what could we possibly need to be troubled about. We have only to ask and we will receive.

**Amen**