

The Creed is a Rollercoaster

John 14:1-14

The Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 14, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Our Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am."

I am convinced that for years I have misunderstood these words. For years I have understood these words to mean that Jesus would ascend into heaven. While He was in heaven, He would do some kind of divine construction work on our place in heaven. When heaven was prepared, then Jesus would come back for us and take us to heaven so that we may be where He is.

The first problem with this understanding is that you have to wait until Jesus comes back in order to get into heaven which raises some questions about those who are dead right now. But the bigger problem is that I have misunderstood what He means when He says that He is going to the Father. My suspicion is that maybe some of you have had the same misunderstanding also.

Everywhere else in John's Gospel when our Lord talks about going to the Father it is a veiled reference to His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus told His disciples on the night when He was betrayed, "My hour has come." He also told them, "I am going to the Father and yet none of you rejoices."

The reason that they did not rejoice is likely because they had no idea what He was talking about. Jesus had constantly told them that He was going away. He told them that where He was going they would not be able to come, but that they would come later.

All of it makes sense if He is talking about His crucifixion and resurrection. The disciples would not be able to initially follow Jesus in His crucifixion and resurrection and ascension. He had to face those things alone. The disciples would later follow Jesus in His crucifixion, resurrection, and coming ascension.

So when Jesus says that He is going to the Father, He means that He is going to be betrayed, crucified, resurrected, and ascended. That is what He means. That being the case when our Lord says that He is going to the Father's house in order to prepare a place for You, He means that He is going to the cross, resurrection, and ascension. When He goes to the cross, He prepares your place in the Father's house. The place is prepared. He will come back for you to take you to be where He is. Since He is risen from the dead and ascended to the Father, when He comes back for you and takes you to be where He is, He will raise you from the dead and you will ascend to meet Him in the air and you will be in the Father's house.

This is what Jesus means when He says that He is the Way, the truth and the life. He is the truth and He is the life, but first and foremost He is the way to the Father. He is the pathway to the Father. His path to the Father is crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. That is the way to the Father. Crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension are all one way.

That is why some bloggers online talk about the "Christ event." It is all one event. Or to put in another way, as soon as Satan enters into Judas Iscariot to betray our Lord events are set in motion which cannot be stopped.

God proves Himself to be craftier than Satan, because He had fooled Satan into entering Judas Iscariot to betray our Lord. When Satan did this, He set in motion a series of events which would lead to the defeat of Satan. I would point out that Lord Voldemort had the same problem.

Once Jesus is arrested, His crucifixion is inevitable. It is inevitable because of the logical unfolding of events, but it is also inevitable because the Scriptures say these things will happen. Once Jesus dies it is inevitable that He will rise again. The Scriptures have said so and the Lord Himself said so. One Jesus rises, it is inevitable that He will ascend to the Father. This is His path to the Father. Your place in the Father's house is prepared. Satan is defeated.

This is why I say that the Apostles' Creed is like a rollercoaster. Until the rollercoaster gets to the top of the first drop there are many things that could happen. It is easy to stop the coaster if necessary for safety reasons. Once it passes the first drop, the coaster will fly to its destination with nothing to stop it. It is hard to know where in the Scriptures all of this inevitability begins. If I am right about the creed, it starts as soon as God says, "Let there be light." It certainly starts as soon as Judas betrays Jesus.

Your place in the Father's house is prepared. Your way to the place is also prepared.

This is why our Lord says in other places, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." The path to the Father is crucifixion and resurrection and then when the Lord returns ascension. In order for you to get to the Father, you must be crucified, raised, and ascended.

This is why when God describes faith in Galatians, chapter three, He puts into the mouth of Saint Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life that I live I live by faith in the Son of God who gave Himself for me." Anyone who lives the life of faith in Christ is crucified.

Elsewhere God describes baptism with these words, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, you too may walk in newness of life."

So when I say that the path to the Father is crucifixion, I want you to know that you may not be nailed to a cross like Jesus was, but that does not mean that you will not be crucified. You will be crucified because that is the path to the Father.

Now let us not misunderstand what our Lord is getting at. While you may not be nailed to boards and suspended in the air, you are still crucified. And while our Lord means something other than literal crucifixion, let us not spiritualize the crucifixion that we undergo to get to the Father, like it was some kind of pretend crucifixion that we only think about in our heads and not literally undergo in our lives. The crucifixion that our Lord is talking about is being dead to oneself.

Jesus had to be dead to Himself in order to offer His life for sinners. If He were alive to Himself, He would have counted His life more worthy of being saved than yours. But since He counted your life more worthy of being saved than His own, it is apparent that He was dead to Himself.

In the same way when the Bible everywhere talks about your crucifixion it is talking about being dead to yourself. When you are dead to yourself, you will do the will of the Father. There is what you want to do with your life and then there is what you do with your life. When you do what you do with your life and not what you want to do with your life in accordance with the will of God, you are dead to yourself.

The most obvious way that this crucifixion of yours manifests itself is in your vocations. Your callings have you do things that you would rather not do. Your callings commit you to things that you would rather not do. When Jesus crucifies you to yourself, you wind up doing those things according to

your callings that you would rather not do and when that happens you are dead to yourself and alive to God in Christ Jesus. After all it is Christ Jesus who issues you the callings in which you die.

You husbands, think of all of the things that you do for your wives that you would rather not do and if your wife were not in your life you would not be doing them, but you do them for her out of love for her because you are dead to yourself. That is the death that Jesus is talking about.

You wives, think of all of the things that you do for your husbands that you would rather not do and would not be doing if it were not for the fact that he is in your life. When you submit to him in this way, you are dying to yourself and living for the God who called you to be wife.

The same thing is true of fathers, mothers, sons, daughters and the list goes on. But in the end behind all of it is the will of God. When you are crucified to yourself you do not keep the law of God in order to earn your salvation. That would make you alive and earning your own salvation. When you are crucified with Christ, you receive your own salvation as a gift because there is no other way for a dead man to receive it. You are dead to yourself. You have no power or control over anything at all. You only have things beyond yourself which lead you to the Father's house.

This is the path to the Father's house. Anyone who sees the Father will see this path. Therefore anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the Father.

Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus. Sounds metaphysical. Sounds like I have no idea what Jesus is talking about. Sounds like a Trinitarian mystery.

But the fact that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus is why you believe in Jesus. One does not just up and believe in Jesus. One believes in Jesus because Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus.

The result of Jesus being in the Father and the Father being in Jesus is that the words of Jesus are the work of the Father. Our Lord states, "The words that I speak are not from Myself, but the Father who remains in Me does His work." I would have expected our Lord to say that the words that He speaks are not from Himself, but that they come from the Father, but that is not what He says. What He says is that the words that He speaks are not from Himself, but the Father does His works. That means that the words of Jesus are the work of the Father.

Now think about everything that our Lord spoke. Some of His words are more obviously the work of the Father. He tells lame people to get up, pick up their mat, and walk. And they do so. The word of Jesus is the work of the Father. He tells the ears of deaf people to be opened and they are opened. The word of Jesus is the work of the Father. He tells dead people to rise and they rise. The word of Jesus is the work of the Father. If you have the words of Jesus, you have the work of the Father. You have the word of Jesus to forgive you and your forgiveness is the work of the Father.

Therefore the miracles of Jesus testify that He is the Word of the Father. The miracles of Jesus testify that the Father sent Him. The miracles of Jesus are crowned off with His resurrection. His resurrection testifies above all that the Father sent Him that His words are the works of the Father and that He is indeed the way and if He is the way then He is by definition the truth and the life. There is no other route to the Father except His crucifixion and resurrection. There is no other route to the Father except Him.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.