

May 14, 2017 – John 14:1-14

It's all Greek to me. Perhaps you've heard that expression before. It's a common enough saying. If you're not aware, it actually originates in English from Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. And even before that, it was an Latin expression used during the Middle Ages.

It's all Greek to me. It's not actually in a foreign language. But it might as well be. It makes absolutely no sense. It's gibberish. It's beyond comprehension. It's so complicated there's no way I'll ever understand it.

As a pastor, this concept is important to me. Because the entire New Testament is actually written in Greek. And even after it's translated into English, it can still be pretty confusing at times. So I never, ever want you to leave one of my sermons saying, "It's all Greek to me." It's as if he never even bothered to translate it into English.

And yet, it's surprising how often Jesus seems to be speaking a different language than his disciples. Over and over again, he says things and the disciples are totally baffled by what he's trying to tell them. And our Gospel lesson is a perfect example of that. Because at a time when the disciples need him to be the most clear, he seems to become the most cryptic.

He tells them, "Let not your hearts be troubled." But how can they not be troubled. I mean, first, just a few minutes prior in the previous chapter, he tells them that there is a betrayer in their midst. That one of them is a liar and a wolf in sheep's clothing who is far more interested in money than being Jesus' disciple.

Then he tells them that Peter, their leader, their chief spokesman, their rock, is going to deny Jesus to the world. Three times, in fact. He will publicly denounce his Lord to save his own skin. Which probably has the disciples thinking, if Peter is going to crumble under pressure, what chance do I have?

And then, finally, we get to this passage. I am leaving you. And where I am going you cannot follow. It sounds an awful lot like Jesus is abandoning them, if you don't know what comes next. I mean, if I stood up here and announced that I would only be with you a little longer and then I'm going to leave and go somewhere so far away, so remote and foreign, that there is no way you could follow after me even if you tried. You would probably say, "Alright... I guess we need to find a new pastor."

This whole speech has got to be really, really troubling for the disciples. And yet, Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled." OK... why? Spell it out for us. You've just dropped three huge bombshells on us that seem pretty devastating. So fix this. Make this better. Tell us how we can possibly get through this without our hearts being troubled.

But what Jesus says doesn't sound very comforting. In fact, to his disciples and to us, it doesn't even sound very intelligible. He talks about His Father's house and going to prepare a room for us. He tells them in chapter 13 that where he is going they cannot come. And then he immediately turns around and says that he'll come back to bring them to the place where he is going. And that, in fact, they already know the way to get to this place that he still hasn't identified.

And they ask him, point blank, "What are you talking about? You're not making any sense. We don't even know where you're going. How can we possibly know how to get there?" And yet Jesus continues to talk in what sound like riddles. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

So Philip says, "Alright, I'm trying to follow along here. You're going back to Your Father. So maybe if you show us Your Father then we'll know where You're going and then we can figure out how to get there." But Jesus responds like they're the ones who aren't making any sense. Why should I show you the Father? You've already seen the Father. You've seen me. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

You really start to feel sorry for them. Because by the end of this, they're probably feeling like Jesus is playing a cruel joke on them. Like he's intentionally talking in riddles. But they obviously don't feel like that forever. Because John, the author of this text, is one of them. He's listening to all this. Just as confused as the rest of them. And yet, at some point, he figures it all out. And he realizes that we need to hear it too.

Because we're in the same boat as the twelve. This wasn't just a message for those few men. This is a message for all of Jesus' disciples. The times may have changed, but the problems facing the Church do not.

You're looking for Jesus. You can't find him. You feel like he's left you alone in a world full of greedy wolves in sheep's clothing, like Judas. Full of hypocrites who claim to be leaders of the church but deny Jesus to save their own skin, like Peter. You feel like God has abandoned you, like the disciples felt at the crucifixion. What now?

Well first, you remember that he's gone to prepare a place for you. A place in His Father's house. Which is an interesting thing to say. I mean, the first thing that probably comes to mind for you is heaven. Jesus ascended into heaven and he's going to prepare a place for us in heaven.

And that's true. And yet, I think it's bigger than that. Because that misses the fact that Jesus is talking in family terms here. Jesus is God's Son. He speaks with the same voice as His Father. And His Father is making a place for us in His house. In his household. In his family.

Jesus is going to prepare a room for us. A permanent place in God's household. It's like the nursery that my wife and I prepared for our daughter. We had to get it done before she was born. Because when we came home from the hospital we wanted to walk into that house and bring her into her own room.

She didn't need that room, honestly. At least, not yet. She spent months sleeping in our room with us. We probably could have waited. But we didn't. Because we wanted to show her from day one that she has a place in our family.

God the Father wants the same thing. He sent His only begotten Son into this world to adopt us as sons and daughters. And to prepare a place for us in his own home.

Aleyiah, this morning you got a room in God's house. You were adopted through baptism into God's family. When you show up at God's doorstep, he's not going to say, "Who are you?" And send you away. He's going to say, "Aleyiah! I've got your room all ready for you. Come on in. Let me show you around. Make yourself at home." Aleyiah has a home in God's house because she is a part of God's family. You and I have a home in God's house because we are a part of God's family.

But it's a home that we can't get to. We don't know where it is. And we can't follow Jesus there. In one sense, Thomas was right. Apart from Christ, we don't know the way. We are born looking for God. But we don't know where to find Him. Which is exactly why the world turns to so many different false gods. We know that home is with God the Father. But we don't have a clue where He is or how to get there.

And even if we did, we couldn't make the journey. Because the road to God the Father is the path that Jesus walked. The path of perfect righteousness, without sin or error. The path of suffering and death, without complaint. The path that led all the way to the gates of hell themselves, where Satan was defeated, because death had no hold on Jesus.

The way to the Father is the longest, hardest, narrowest road that any human being has ever been asked to walk. And Jesus walked it. So that we don't have to. So that he can be the way, the truth, and the life for us.

In a world full of people who betray us, he is the way to the Father that will never lead us astray. In a world full of hypocrites and liars, he is the truest and most trustworthy voice in our lives. In a world where we feel isolated and lonely by all the death and suffering around us, he is our life and our salvation, whom death could not hold. And who promises resurrection on the last day.

Jesus has shown us the Father. He has shown us a God who does not abandon his people. Who does not simply throw us to the wolves of Satan and his demon, nor the world and its sinfulness. But who sent His Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

The words that Jesus spoke were not riddles or gibberish. That were not a foreign language. They were words of life and salvation. To disciples – then and now – who don't always understand them. But who cling to them nonetheless. For they are peace to troubled hearts. That we may believe in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.