

## WELCOME 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – 3 Easter '21 B

John 14:1-14

Welcome! It's great to be together again. We are delighted you are here. As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources in your hands for you to use *so that worship becomes an all-week experience. As God leads you into the fullness of His word & his work in your lives he will then introduce you to someone who needs to hear the good news from you. Also...somewhere along the way today you're likely to feel a tap on your shoulder or tug at your heart...song prayer word of scripture...Don't ignore it! That's probably the Holy Spirit prompting you some way Let's talk about that after worship when that happens.*

**As we move into this week...** "First: Do no harm" We're familiar with the Hippocratic Oath of ancient Greek Drs that continues to this day. Google adapted that for their first corporate motto: "Don't be evil"

Our contemporary society has adapted that further still toward something like "Just be nice" or "Be tolerant" which implies that *ALL* lifestyles, viewpoints, & values are to be accepted & affirmed as equal. can't question disagree dispute

"Tolerance" declares truth is fluid & flexible b/t situations, circumstances & people. But the base meaning of "tolerance" is to "endure or put up with"

Are we really called to "put up w/" that which could be harmful, destructive, or evil just for the sake of tolerating someone else's version of "their truth"?

As followers of Jesus we believe He has given us fixed, reliable, unique & universal truth about ourselves, our lives & the eternal life God offers in his life/death/resurrection...life beyond tolerance...full abundant joy/hope-filled

Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, & the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*" & his triumph over the grave means he alone determines what is true for us & our world. When our heart beats in time w/ his, we live true love for those around us, true hope in every circumstance & true grace that transforms the fear uncertainty & disorder of our world into certain assured life w/ the Father.

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

*God of victory over death, your Son revealed himself again and again, and convinced his followers of his resurrection. Grant that we may know his risen presence, be fed from your abundant provision, pursue your purpose on earth knowing freedom from fear, experiencing the fullness of your power & doing the works you have left us to do, until we join the hosts of heaven in worship and praise of you who alone is worthy of blessing and honor, glory and power, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Let's hear God's Word...

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. When you're looking for truth to live by, on what sources do you rely?
2. Who are the fixed-point dependable people in your life?

Now we'll sing...Cornerstone...

### 3 Easter – '21 B – LIFE PULSE: LIFE BEYOND...TOLERANCE

I am reliably informed that the avg human heart weighs about 312g – beats about 101,000x/day - pumps 7600 litres/day of blood through 97,000 kilometres of blood vessels. *Wait...there's more!* If you take two heart cells & put them in a petri dish side-by-side they will beat at their own separate rhythm...but if they touch they synchronize to the same pulse. *I'm not done yet.* Same thing w/ people. Get next to someone you love & hold hands Unaided your hearts will synchronize rhythms...your pulse matches theirs. That's why infants who sleep in bed w/ their parents have a lower chance of SIDS...their pulse - heartrate syncs to mom/dad.

We are designed to link/connect/synchronize our lives beyond our own skin. In 1931, psychologist Winthrop Niles Kellogg & his wife explored the limits of this behaviour. They'd just had a son & at the same time adopted a baby chimp & tried to raise it alongside their child to see if the chimp would adopt human behaviours or actually think it was human. After 9 months they moved the chimp out of their home because their son became more chimp-like & the chimp chimped. Why? Humans are hardwired w/ what are called "mirror neurons." Go *blbbblbbb* @ a baby. What happens?

That in fact is where empathy comes from...mirror neurons enable us to *feel with* or from the Gk...*feel inside* the emotion of someone else...We are designed to link connect - synchronize our lives **AND CARE ABOUT** folks outside of us. But just like the baby & the chimp...we're wired to connect w/ others & sometimes we sync w/ & empathize in unhealthy ways...w/ those who do not share our values, lifestyles, worldview, or beliefs & the world takes advantage of that telling us to be more tolerant. Or when we won't buy into & treat as equally valid accept/affirm values, lifestyles, worldview, or beliefs unlike ours it says we are being intolerant & accuses us of some sort of "ism." So... We empathize away from the good beautiful & true & toward the harmful, destructive, or evil (become chimp-ish) *"bad company corrupts good character."* - 1 Cor 15:33

In Rom 12 Paul says: **Don't** copy the behavior & customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person... & to the Eph he writes: **"...we need** no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or has cleverly lied to us & made the lie sound like the truth." – Eph 4:14 Evidently our struggle to remain anchored in the good beautiful & true is not ours alone nor something new...which is why <sup>b/4</sup> Jesus was crucified he made sure his followers knew, **"I am the way, the truth, & the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."** To Pilate he says, **"I was** born & came into the world to testify to **the** truth. All who love **the** truth recognize what I say is true." – Jn 18:37 *nebulous-free-floating-airy-fairy*

You've heard me say often, Jesus stands firmly/consistently in the life/flow of the OT He was right in line w/ the prophets/promises of the Hebrew Scriptures. When we turn there we find a handful of words for truth: **AMAN** - firm & fixed **EMETH** - firm, solid, reliable, valid **ISH EMETH** - a person of truth – consistency dependability faithfulness...In Hebrew thinking truthfulness is faithfulness - it's firm, fixed, enduring & dependable...that which is true is inseparably linked w/ dependability & reliability...you can trust it – count on it – bet your life on it. So when Jesus repeatedly says **"THE"** he's promising that all who are drawn to him & into his life love & salvation are receiving the genuine unshakable gift only he can give...enduring... irrevocable...unchanging...will not back out on the deal. No bait & switch...It's certain not vague – assured & enduring not malleable & temporary or circumstantial.

Remember...John has a goal in everything he tells us about Jesus: **"...these** are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, & that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name. – Jn 20:31 **SO THAT YOU** may endure in believing (trusting, being assured, holding tight to the reality) that Jesus is the promise-fulfilling Messiah, the Son of God (presence of God himself among us) & by believing you may have life that comes only by being attuned to connected w/ in relationship w/ the Father...the living God, the Creator of the world, present among us in our world in our flesh in his Son & through faith - believing - being drawn into him we live eternal, abundant, supernaturally powerful, bubbling overflowing life forever starting...right...now. c.f. Jn 7:37-39

In a world up to its eyes in "fake news" & accusations of fake news, conspiracy theories & rumours of conspiracy theories, where rage overwhelms reason in public discourse & non-judgmental indifference "do what you like" mentality pervades... How do we live up to the higher calling Jesus offers & John writes to encourage?

Listen to Jesus... **"Don't** let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, & trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a **place** for you? When everything is ready, I will come & get you, so that you will always **be with me where I am.**" Of course their hearts are troubled There's every reason for them to feel like their world is crumbling beneath their feet & to this point Jesus has made it worse... he's going away & they're not coming w/ him. But how different is our current climate? It's ironic, in an age calling for tolerance, we live in a society that is deeply intolerant. Words that used to be commonplace are now called "hate speech." Voicing an unapproved opinion will get you booted from your job or public scorn or banned from social media. Are you really free to speak your mind, to hold an opinion or disagree w/ an accepted PC narrative?

In the midst of whatever cultural or personal turmoil **JESUS PROMISES A PLACE BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY A PERSON:** Himself. In response to their worry/anxiety/fear **NB** Jesus does not break down the Father's divine/cosmic will so they can understand. He does not describe the complex profound sacrificial love that motivates his action. He is the only one they will ever know whom they can trust to do the Father's will in bringing a broken world home safely to God whole...in joy...alive & at peace. Jesus proclaims that he reconciles us to the Father, he reveals the Father to us, & he reigns on behalf of his Father. More than a mere servant, *Jesus manifests the Father* He shows us the true nature & character & face of God.

**"We** have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" **"Lord,** show us the Father, & we will be satisfied." Thomas & Philip sound like folks I know who lived the last 15 months in the uncertainty & fear of isolation, confusion, & desperation. Why's there no toilet paper? Where do I get a mask? Will wearing it do any good? Should I get a vaccine? When can I visit my family? I heard someone sneeze? But rather than a smooth road through trouble **JESUS CONNECTS US TO A RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE LARGER THAN LIFE:** **Just** believe that I am in the Father & the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

The Father, as Jesus reveals him, is not unmoved or uncaring, distant or hardhearted. He is passionately fervently engaged in our lives, pledged to our welfare & wills to bring us through all things to himself so we thrive in abundant life in Jesus' name. No one says faith makes things easier & neither the Bible nor history offer even the scantest evidence of such a thing...But it **ALWAYS MEANS** we do not travel alone. We live move & have our being w/ the presence of God, the one revealed in the person of Jesus....who wills & works for our good *one gracious blessing after another* Jn 1:16

I started this morning talking about hearts & the amazing character of hearts that strive to beat in sync w/ one another...how that's a great thing b/c folks who care for & love one another but is dangerous when our hearts beat to a rhythm other than the Father's as we experience it in Jesus...OT prophet Ezekiel spoke God's promise about our hearts: **"I will** sprinkle clean water on you, & you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, & you will no longer worship idols. I will give you a new heart, & I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart & give you a tender, responsive heart. I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees & be careful to obey my regulations." – Ez 36:25-27 God promises the work of re-tuning our hearts to his is his to accomplish & will ultimately be carried out by his Spirit...just as Jesus promised...

**"I tell** you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, & even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father...I will ask the Father, & he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth." Easter is the Good News that God has given us a new heart. God has given us his own heart, in Jesus & **JESUS SHARES HIS SPIRIT WHICH TRANSFORMS EVERYTHING IT TOUCHES**

Now, instead of a heart plagued by sin, guilt, fear & shame, me-living-for-me...we've been given a heart pulsing w/ the Spirit's power & w/ forgiveness & love & life that not even death can overcome...a heart that actually brings transformation & new life into the places where you allow your life to touch others in the name of Jesus. If you are a believer in Jesus, that's what your life is. Your works, your life is a display of the trustworthiness & truth of Jesus.

You & I are to live so united to & in sync w/ Jesus that we carry on his work by his power & do the kinds of things that point people to Jesus, & through Jesus to the Father. Will we all do miraculous stuff...loaves/fish Lazarus...Jairus' daughter... Maybe? Maybe not? **Are** we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! – 1 Cor 12:29-30 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

But we do have Christ's power to speak his word of forgiveness, his promise of reconciliation w/ the Father, his assurance of life abundant eternal & filled w/ joy. We do have his Spirit w/in us to live w/ true love for those around us, true hope in every circumstance & true grace that transforms the fear uncertainty & disorder of our world into certain assured life w/ the Father...because his triumph over the grave means he alone determines what is true (way & life) for us & our world....now & forever.

### **Take it home...**

What is one way you are going to live out the truth of Jesus alive in you this week? Preferably in a way you can share w/ someone else...30 secs... **Go...Swap...**

Let's pray with that in mind...

**Lord Jesus pour out your Spirit in us again today so that we live out your love, witness to our hope in you, and trust your presence & power at all times. Transform the world through your work in us and defend us from becoming changed into the world's likeness. Let our hearts beat in time to yours and our lives reflect your grace and glory. We pray in your name...Amen**