

Trinity Church
April 20, 2008

Fifth Sunday of Easter
RCL, Year A, Easter 5

A Sermon Preached by The Rev. James C. Ransom

*Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life!
such a way as gives us breath;
such a truth as ends all strife;
such a life as killeth death.
Amen.*

Throughout the whole of Holy Scripture, but particularly in John's Gospel and in today's readings, there is an overflowing of Divine abundance. John begins his Gospel by saying that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." "From his fullness," John continues, "have we all received grace upon grace ... grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." At Cana, Jesus' first miracle is to turn water into wine at a wedding feast. And not just a little water into wine, but gallons and gallons of the very best wine, an abundance of grace. A wild profusion of grace.

When Jesus comes to Samaria, to Jacob's well, Jesus tells the woman about living water gushing up to eternal life. A wellspring of water, a torrent that cannot be turned off, a deluge of grace. Now, in John 14, Jesus says that in God's house there are many mansions, many more dwelling places, room for everyone and to spare, absolutely everyone, and Jesus is going to prepare a place just for you. This is not like passengers at Southwest elbowing each other in group A to get the best seats on the plane. This is an all reserved flight. There is a seat for everyone, and every seat is just as good as any other seat.

At the very end of John's Gospel, he writes that there is so much more to tell about Jesus that if it were all written down, there do not exist enough books to contain it all. So much more about Jesus that we will never tire or exhaust the grace that comes to us through him, the living stone, the foundation of our faith. George Herbert invokes abundant grace in his song:

*Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
such a light as shows a feast,
such a feast as mends in length;
such a strength as makes his guest.*

As our Easter celebration continues through five Sundays now, the flowers get fewer, the resurrection stories more obscure. We have sung all the Easter hymns and we are now repeating them. Easter's glory seems to fade. But the effect is meant to be just the opposite. It is grace upon grace, story after story to build up our faith, hymn after hymn of alleluia. Streams of living water, gallons of the very best wine, room after room of endless beauty in the palace God has prepared. Every time we come to church, week after week, there is always grace and to spare, "pure, spiritual milk" to drink, as First Peter says, "taste and see that the Lord is good." "Come to Jesus, the living stone, and be built up as living stones into a spiritual mansion, a holy priesthood, a chosen race, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

The abundant grace of God flowing out to us in and through the Risen Christ never fails, never lessens, but is always Life for us, Truth in us, the Grace that shows us the way to the Father. What a miracle that this Way, this Truth, this Life has become our way, our truth, and Christ's life in us, so much grace that like the martyr Stephen at his death, there is no distinguishing him

from Jesus. He commends himself to God and prays that God will forgive those bent on killing him. He is not just like Jesus; Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life in him and through him until there is no distinction.

Nietzsche, that great critic of faith, wrote, "Christians will have to look more redeemed if people are to believe in their Redeemer." He couldn't be more correct. Grace flowing out of us, praise flowing over us, loving kindness under our feet. We are fountains of God's love in the world. That love can never be exhausted, never be extinguished. Today we open our hearts to God. Today we give God our spirits, our very lives, as we embrace the Way, live in the Truth, receive the Life.

*Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
such a joy as none can move;
such a love as none can part;
such a heart as joys in God.*

Amen.