

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church  
The Rev. Cara Spaccarelli  
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John 15:9-15

Nothing is more disconcerting than riding in the passenger seat after thirty years of being in the driver's seat. Sure I could mean that metaphorically, but I mean it literally. I'm teaching my 16 year old to drive, and that involves fifty hours – year 5 0 of riding in the passenger seat. My first thoughts after our first few drives: 1) I never knew the mailboxes were so close to the road and 2) how has no parent had a heart attack teaching their child to drive.

My dislocation – the shift two feet to the right - has totally disrupted my car-riding experience. I can't listen to music because its too distracting. My driving companion doesn't like the windows down even in beautiful springtime weather.. I'm not able to use the mirrors in assisting with lane changes. And of course, there's the automatic physical responses that have no effect – braking with my foot where there is no brake, turning the wheel where there is no wheel. While all this disruption in my riding experience is happening, I also have to exude a calm, confident presence worthy of driving instructor; calm and confident is not what I'm feeling on the inside.

I'm 12 hours into the fifty and acutely aware of how disruptive this relatively minor dislocation is. Dislocation is disruptive. Whether it is a physical dislocation or a less obvious to see one. Dislocations change our perspectives, our roles; they give a new lens to view life that almost always starts out murky. Some life events are widely recognized as major dislocations in our culture – a move, the birth of a child, retirement, a major illness or surgery. And other things happen that we weren't expecting to disrupt us but so effect the routine and rhythm of our life that our rootedness in these external features come loose and to re-stabilize we have to develop an internal rootedness that allows us to move through these seasons of dislocation.

We have Scriptural dislocation this week. The lesson from Acts and the gospel reading are out of liturgical season order. Five weeks ago we had Easter and so we should be with the resurrected Jesus, but we aren't. This section we are reading from the gospel of John is in what's called the farewell discourse, all happening the night before he dies, so we've jumped back in time to before Jesus' death. In two weeks, we'll celebrate Pentecost, when the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples, and that happens in the second chapter of Acts, but this reading is the tenth chapter of Acts and we appear to have the Holy Spirit showing up. So everything is discombobulated on this sixth Sunday of Easter. Similar to seasons of dislocation in our own life, this disruption in our external rootedness, so to speak, in the liturgical calendar – gives us a chance to internally root. And Jesus is very clear how he wants us to internally root; he wants us to abide.

Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." "Abide" is not a word we use much these days. We do not often ask people, "Where do you abide?" You will likely come across the word more times while reading the gospel of John than you ever will in real-life conversation. In fact, if you read through the first eleven verses of John 15 (NRSV), you will find the word eleven times. Jesus is really trying to drive home the message to abide in his love. To make your home in his love. It can also be translated "remain" or "stay" in my love.

This encouragement is coming at the same time that Jesus is preparing his disciples for a major dislocation. Jesus, himself, is about to relocate in a way that it is going to be a lot harder to abide together. Moreover, Jesus knows, and talks about in this farewell discourse, that they are going to be sent out – gifted with the Holy Spirit – after he is gone to go and make more disciples. Everybody in the room is about to have their external roots pulled out. They are going to have to find an internal rootedness in this time, and Jesus is inviting them to root themselves in love.

Much can be said and has been said about God's love, and what it might look like to abide in this love, but I just want to talk about one aspect of it, and it's an aspect that Jesus and God model in today's passages, and it's an aspect that I'm finding helpful in my own driver dislocation. Trust. Jesus trusts his disciples – I now call you friends. I trust you. God sends the Holy Spirit in Acts, not just to Jesus' primary disciples in chapter 2, but to these Gentiles who are brand new converts. God trusts them. Love trusts. God has trusted us with God's love and invites us to trust in God's love and with God's love.

It is not a naïve trust. Jesus knows the disciples are going to mess up; God knows the disciples are going to mess up. Messing up isn't a problem when your perspective is eternity and you're responsible for cosmic reconciliation; it doesn't make you so concerned about temporal mishaps. Far more important to the divine is that we are part of this way of love in the first place, and the only way that we can be a part of it, is for the divine to trust us to be a part of it. As we live into God's love, come to trust it ourselves, we find an internal rootedness that withstands all kinds of dislocations and invites us to trust more.

One thing I have found has helped me weather my hours in the passenger seat is to trust the driver. It is not a naïve trust. I trust my son to be a driver who has spent a total of 12 hours behind the wheel. When I am in the passenger seat, my phone is put away, my eyes and ears are alert to what is happening around on the road. I'm in teaching mode. At the same time, I trust that he is ready and able to learn. I trust that he is up to the task. I trust that we will come out of each drive unscathed, and if not, that the damage will not be anything that can't be healed in God's time. It has been a practice of trusting with God's love, and this practice has helped me find internal rootedness that makes the calm and confidence in the passenger seat, less superficial, and more real.

To abide in God's love, especially in times of transition, we need to trust. To trust God's love is enough to get us through until life otherwise stabilizes. It is not a naïve trust. It is not a trust that God will make the pathway from here to there smooth or will protect us from every danger. It is a trust that all things work for good for those who love God. It is a trust that in God all things will be reconciled. When we trust, we practice this way of love that Jesus showed us, for Jesus trusted us in his own time of transition. It helped him stay rooted in God's love when everything else around him was changing. Trusting in God's love and trusting with God's love can help us do the same.