



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

## **A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 10, 2020**

by Garland F. Pierce

### **An “After this” Belief**

#### **John 14:1-14**

14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

14:2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

14:4 And you know the way to the place where I am going."

14:5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

14:7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

14:8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

14:12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

14:13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14:14 If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Belief is powerful. Once it is formed; a deeply-held belief does not easily change. Sometimes, in the midst of chaos, turmoil, and shifting currents, it serves as the anchor. It fuels decisions and actions alike.

Given its power, it is no surprise to many that John's gospel account spends so much time dealing with belief. Just look at the number of times **believe** appears just in the passage for today. On the journey with Jesus, the disciples experienced some things that were simply too miraculous and marvelous to fully comprehend and at times to even believe; but, Jesus says, "Believe in God, believe also in me." Thomas asks that Jesus show them the way; and, Jesus declares that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Philip asks that Jesus show them the Father; and, Jesus says, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves." If all of this was not hard enough to believe, Jesus says something that seems even more miraculous and marvelous, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." Not only does this passage recount Jesus' command that we believe in him and God; it reminds us that Jesus believes in the believer. Despite our actions and sometimes our own unbelief, Jesus believes that because of our mustard-seed faith and our sometimes shaky belief that we will also do the works that he does and will do even greater. That's miraculous! Us doing the works that Christ has done; that's marvelous! Greater works; that's almost unbelievable! But there it is; Jesus believes in us!

This passage served as the scriptural foundation of the Late Connectional Lay President Valerie Gary Bell's platform and the theme of the last Connectional Lay Organization Biennial, "Onward to Greater." She believed that as believers, the church, the community of believers, laity and clergy, could work collectively to address the issues of our institutions but that even more, we could do greater ministry.

There has been much talk about "after this." What will life look like after the coronavirus pandemic? What will family life be like after this? What will church look like after this? When will "after this" even occur? I do not know what "after this" will be like or look like or feel like. I do take courage in the good news of the gospel of John, believing is powerful; and, Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith, believes in me. Jesus believes in us that we can do greater. Some might caution that it's too early to think about "after this." We do not know when the vaccine will come. We do not know when a cure will be discovered. We don't know when the curve will be flattened for good. Depending on your context, political belief, and level of "sheltering fatigue", you may feel that it is time to open up and move on to the new normal or you may feel that there are too many unknowns, too many still untested, too little assurances, and that it is just too early. Yet, it does not seem too early to start thinking about "after this." We might not have all the answers; but, if we believe in Jesus' promise and if we believe that he believes in us, we can start to imagine "greater". A church that is truly inclusive and always striving to be the beloved community and salt and light in the world. Greater. Neighbor truly loving and caring about and caring for neighbor. Greater. Folks working at true and honest relationships. Greater. Nations beating swords into

ploughshares, studying war no more. Greater. No more comorbidities and underlying health conditions but individuals, families, communities, and churches healthy because of equal access and a quality of care and nourishment, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Jesus believes. I believe. Together, we can and will do greater after this, even starting now.

**TALK:** Take a moment to be silent, reflect and/or share—What are some of your greatest hopes for after this pandemic?

Read or recite the Apostle's Creed, our Affirmation of Faith

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

**PRAY:** Good and gracious God, sometimes it is hard to even imagine; but, you made us and called us good. Thank you for Jesus, the Resurrected Christ, who declares even now that because we believe in you and him, we can do what he did and even greater. Forgive us when we fail to believe or strive to do so. In the midst of uncertainty, pain, and loss, we hold now to our belief and to his belief in us. We hold to "greater." Give us the strength and courage to go onward toward it. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, AMEN.

**ACT:**

1. In your conversations this week with those you come in contact, engage them in imaging the "greater" to come "after this." It may be just the encouragement they may need.
2. Contact mothers and women who are significant to you and give them a message of love and thanks.
3. See also the Word Search that accompanies this devotion.
4. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

**Song:**

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus  
AMEC Hymnal, #440

1. 'Tis so sweet to trust in Je-sus,  
Just to take Him at His word;  
Just to rest up-on His prom-ise,  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

*Refrain:*

*Je-sus, Je-sus, how I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er!  
Je-sus, Je-sus, pre-cious Je-sus! O for grace to trust Him more!*

2. O how sweet to trust in Je-sus,  
Just to trust His cleans-ing blood;  
Just in sim-ple faith to plunge me  
Neath the heal-ing, cleans-ing flood!

*Refrain*

3. Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Je-sus,  
Just from sin and self to cease;  
Just from Je-sus sim-ply tak-ing  
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

*Refrain*

4. I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee,  
Pre-cious Je-sus, Sav-ior, friend;  
And I know that Thou art with me,  
Wilt be with me to the end.

*Refrain*

**Alternative Song:**

*In Bright Mansions Above*, <https://youtu.be/nXI5IWMsOGA>  
African American Spiritual arranged by Roland Carter, performed by The Moses Hogan Singers.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



*The Christian Education Department, AMEC Publishing House, and others will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.*