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Easter 5

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Gone to Prepare a Place for You”

Text: John 14:1-14

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! [*He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*] Alleluia! And He is going to prepare a place for you.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus is going to prepare a place for you. Mothers do that. When I would go home for a visit, my mom would do all sorts of preparations and get all sorts of things ready for me. Things I didn't think I needed, but she was pleased and excited I was coming and wanted to do all that. And now the mother of my children does the same thing. Our house is full again this weekend with my kids home from college - but not for long. Soon they'll leave again, because they're growing up and doing new things. But there's something about a full house. It's a good thing. It's the way things were meant to be, even after our kids grow up and start filling their own houses.

Jesus is going to prepare a place for you. Maybe you don't have a place here. There are homeless people, whose numbers seem to be growing. People in prison. Folks whose homes have been ripped apart by sin, so they're no longer full, or where they're no longer welcome. But whether or not you have a place here, and whether that place is large or small, luxurious or simple, **Jesus is going to prepare a place for you.** And His rooms, the rooms of life, are far more spacious than our abodes of death. And will last forever.

This is the home satan is trying to take away from you. Maybe by making you want your place in this world, and to feel at home here, rather than look to that place that Jesus is preparing for you. Or maybe he will use persecution to try to make you turn away; to make you think all that you're going through now isn't worth it. I remember talking to the bishop of the Lutheran Church in Sudan. He said what the Muslims do there to Christians is *take away their houses* - both their homes and their church. They'll bring a bulldozer to town and say the government is building a road - coincidentally, *right here* . . . right where your church or your home is. So it has to go. And they'll bulldoze it right then and there. And, of course, the road never gets built.

But **Jesus is going to prepare a place for you** that cannot be bulldozed, that cannot be taken away. For He is happy and excited that you are coming; that you will be home with Him forever.

Jesus is going to prepare a place for you. The disciples needed to know that, because things were about to get messy. Things were about to happen that would shake them to the very core of their being. Jesus wants to lift up their thoughts and inspire them with courage and comfort, so that when they see Him arrested, taken away, and crucified in mere hours, they would not despair or lose hope. **He is going to prepare a place for them.** That's what all this was about, He is telling them. His whole life and work. Yes, they had left father, mother, house, home, and job for Him, but they would not be homeless, and they would be rewarded. A hundredfold. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:3) is the very first Beatitude.

So let not your hearts be troubled, Jesus says. Trust. Believe. *I am going* but *I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life.*

Jesus is going . . . to the cross. He is going to the grave. To prepare those places for us as well. He goes to **the cross** so that the crosses placed upon us in our lives be not for our harm but for our good; not for our death but for our life. He goes to the cross to transform it for us, that the suffering, pain, persecution, hardships, and struggles you have not overcome you or be of no purpose, but join you to Jesus and draw you closer to your Saviour. And focus you on **the place He has gone to prepare for you.**

And He goes to **the grave** to prepare that place for us as well, that it be not the end but a passage; that it be our resting place until the day of resurrection to life again. Jesus goes to the tomb to sanctify it; He goes to the place meant to destroy us, to transform it, too, into a bed, so that we may go to the place where He is - to **the place He has gone to prepare for you.**

And so having gone to those places with us and for us, He will come back. He came back in His resurrection, and He will come back again when all things are ready, the place He has gone to prepare - ready. And He will bring us up out of our graves to live in that place, with Him. He wants you there. He is happy and excited to welcome you home. Finally.

Jesus is going to prepare a place for you - all these places, actually. That we always have hope and never be homeless, no matter our situation in this world and life. And He is the only way to it. He is **the way, the truth, and the life**. The only one. *No one comes to the Father except through* [Him].

That offends some people, though it really shouldn't. Think of riding the Metro. If you live in Vienna and want to get home, you have to get on the right train. Only one will take you where you want to go. You could argue that all the trains are alike, so what difference does it make? You could argue that those new ones are nicer, so you'd rather

take one of those. But they won't take you where you want to go. Only one will.

No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. If you want to get home, to that home **Jesus has gone to prepare for you**, He's the only way there. You may think there are other ways, ways that look nicer, that seem better, or that they all look alike - but they're not. Jesus is the only one who died for you and rose from the dead for you. He's the only one who can take you to where you want to be. *He's the only one.* He is **the way, that is the truth, to the life He wants you to have.** A life free from sin, a life in abundance, and a life that will never end.

It's not easy, though. Think of Israel going through the Red Sea. Think of how hard that first step must have been when they began to go through the Red Sea. Or think of what they must have thought halfway across - with all that threatening water on both sides of them! It's not easy. You began the journey through water also, the water of baptism. And there's lots of danger on the way for you, too.

But Jesus has gone before you. The waters you pass through, He has already passed through. In fact, they did overcome Him; the guilt of all your sin and all your death came crashing down upon Him, and yet He came out the other side. And now **He is preparing a place for you there.** For when you come out the other side, too. Or maybe better to say: when He brings you out the other side with Him, risen from the dead, to life.

Jesus is going to prepare a place for you. The disciples, as usual, don't quite get all this. And *I wonder where Peter is?* He's there, of course. But he's unusually silent! He's usually the one who speaks up and puts his foot in his mouth. This time it's Thomas and Philip, though. And Philip who says: ***Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.***

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also, Jesus says. They thought they did know Him. They were with Him for three years now. They had seen things, they had heard much. But they still didn't know Him? But, Jesus says, ***from now on you do know him and have seen him.***

Well, what are they now going to know that they didn't know before? What would they see? What was going to change? The cross. That is going to change everything. From now on, they're going to know Jesus, they're going to know the Father, like never before. For on the cross it would not be miracle-worker-Jesus, great-teacher-Jesus, man-of-unparalleled-compassion-Jesus, or mighty-Jesus - they're going to see how much Jesus loves them as He lays down His life for them. They're going to see and know a love they never knew before and could never imagine - even after all they had seen and heard. That's the first thing.

But part of their wonder here is the same as our wonder - for what Jesus is speaking here is part of the mystery of the Trinity. Jesus is going to the Father, yet, He says, if you've

seen Jesus you've seen the Father. These statements *seem* to contradict one another, and yet are both true. There is only one God, so when you've seen Jesus you've seen the one and only true God in the flesh. But this one true God is at the same time a trinity of persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is simply no analogy or example, no parable, to help us understand how this can be, this reality of God. God is distinct and separate and far above and far different from everything else we know or can understand. So we can understand Philip's statement here. Maybe we even think the same thing sometimes. This is confusing. So show me, Jesus. Show me something, that I can believe.

Well, what He will show you is Himself, on the cross. What He will show you is Himself, laid in the tomb. What He will show you is Himself, alive, on the third day. That you believe. That He did this for you, and that now **He is going to prepare a place for you, that where [He is] you may be also.** That though you die, yet shall you live.

That's the faith Stephen had when He looked up to heaven and saw not a strange and unfamiliar God - He saw His friend, His Saviour.

And so will you. For **Jesus is going to prepare a place for you, and will come again and take you to Himself.** He will come again for you, maybe as you lie in the hospital, maybe at home, maybe when you're young or when you're old, maybe in the midst of turmoil and tragedy, maybe at peace. But He will. He is faithful. For God didn't just create you to be a momentary blip in the history of the world, but to have life with Him forever. And so Jesus came, and so He will come again. The one who is the way, the truth, and the life. The way to the Father. The Father who wants His children with Him, in His house. And not just for a visit, but forever.

And so now He comes here to this place that we have prepared, *to prepare us* - to feed us with His Body and Blood. That our sin be forgiven, that our faith in Him and His promises be strengthened, and that His resurrected life live in us. That when we live as if this were our home and we cling to the things of this world and life, we be forgiven. That, as we prayed, He *direct our hearts to where true joys are found.* And we live like it. And that we be ready for when He comes for us - whenever and wherever that may be. Ready for *the Lamb's High Feast* (LSB #633).

And so we pray: *Come, Lord Jesus!* Come for us. Come for me. And He will. For as He said: ***If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.*** So we're askin'! And He will do it.

For Christ is risen! [*He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*] **And will come again, to take you to that place He has gone to prepare for you.**

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.