Text: Acts 1:12-26

**Introduction**

I’m just going to be honest. I spent way too long attempting to come up with something connecting this set of texts to Mother’s Day. And beyond either the darkly humorous vein of Judas had a mother, or cherry picking “together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus” and making the rest up, all that thinking was rather fruitless.

**Text**

The texts themselves are not committed to the nice and clean mother’s days. The text themselves are a complete mess in those regards actually. And I’m going to phase back and forth a bit between the reading from Acts and the Gospel. But you could summarize each of them under a single word – abandonment. Or at least the feeling of it. The Acts reading is immediately after the Ascension, but before Pentecost. The Gospel reading is from the very end of John’s long Maundy Thursday section, which is often a contemplation of Jesus no longer being with the disciples in the flesh. They are both texts that want to talk about “what do we do now” when things seem to be falling apart.

And maybe that is the Mother’s Day connection. For many people the break in case of emergency call is to mom. But if our society is any evidence, there are just as many who the thought of that call is incomprehensible. And both of those groups eventually join in that place where calling mom is no longer possible. Be it love or anxiety – or a mixture of both – what we have are memories. And memories tend to be more powerful that we moderns acknowledge. The biblical world’s conception of memories was of recreation. When Jesus would say “do this in remembrance of me” he wasn’t talking about misty watercolor memories of the way we were. He was saying recreate this meal wherever you are at. Recreate it in Spirit and Truth.

**Christology**

And I think our Gospel reading gives us some of the guard rails for the “what do we do now” times.

There first remembrance should be that Jesus keeps all that have been given him in His Father’s name. You have been baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And whatever the world - which does hate you because of that name – but whatever the world in its hatred throws at you. It will never be able to take you out of the Father’s hand. His name has been place on your forehead and your heart to mark you as one redeemed. And your name is in the palm of his hand.

The second remembrance should be that “we may have the joy of Christ fulfilled in ourselves.” For the joy that was set before him, Christ endured the cross. That joy was the salvation of many brothers. That joy is in every one who learns to trust the promises of God. That we are no longer of the world. That we have been delivered from the evil one. That the truth of any situation we might be facing in this world does not have to scare us. Because Christ has overcome the world. He sits at the right hand of God, consecrated to seeing that joy reach its fullness.

The third thing for those “what do we do now” times that the gospel lesson gives us to remember is that we have been given the Word. And we have been given that word so that just as Christ has consecrated himself, we might be sanctified in truth. “These things are written that you might believe, and believing have eternal life.” Whatever the situation that has us looking for the emergency glass, the Word of God abides to make us holy.

**Moral**

And our reading from Acts is a wonderful example of the church living out what Jesus had given them. The truth of the situation that they are feeling is rough. There has to be a feeling of abandonment. Jesus has ascended, but the Spirit – the power from on high – has not been poured out yet. As long as the risen Jesus was still making his appearances, things didn’t seem to move forward. Everyone just resided in the joy of the Holiday Season. But now, they have to look forward to the long green season. They have to look forward to the work that is laid before them. And part of that work is recognizing a deeply problematic truth. One of their own company betrayed Jesus. How do they move forward?

And the first thing they do is remember the Word – they turn to the scriptures. Peter does this for two reasons. He remembers that Judas was necessary to fulfill the scriptures. The worst possible thing has been made into something for the good of those who believe. Judas would have killed and silenced the messiah, and God used his actions to fulfill the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit had spoken. While we might not always find our situations spelled out like Peter does, let me suggest that the Old Testament is a treasure trove of God’s people confronting all kinds of things. And it is all there for our learning.

But what Peter does next is I think what Jesus means by being Sanctified in the truth. Peter looks at the scriptures and decides that Judas must be replaced. Pause for a second to consider the boldness of this. Jesus never did this in his post resurrection appearances. Jesus will restore Peter himself, but he never calls someone to replace Judas. And Peter also creates some criteria. It is through this “what do we do now” moment, that the mission of Jesus becomes the mission of the church. “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” is what Jesus would say about this moment. And looing as Scripture, Peter remembers the ways of Jesus and accepts that mission. “Judas had been allotted a share of this ministry.” And this ministry continues.

**Eschatological**

To that boldness that Peter displays he adds two things.

The first is a confession. “You Lord know the hearts of all.” It’s a confession that the decisions that we make might be quite wrong. We can have the right intentions and completely mess things up. Our reading of the Scriptures might not be as clear eyed as we hoped. While you Jesus have been consecrated, we are still in a process of sanctification. You promised that you would be with us. Whatever decisions we are making, bless them. Continue to watch our steps and guard us from the evil one.

And the second thing that Peter adds – the important thing – is a trust that the Lord will do exactly that. “And they cast lots for them.” Unlike the soldiers at the foot of the cross gambling over Jesus’ cloak, these lots are not gambling. Peter and those gathered have searched the scriptures, they’ve remembered the mission and the ways of Jesus, and they’ve confessed their person weakness in the face of that mission which they’ve accepted. These lots are a demonstration of faith that Jesus is with them and will bless their endeavor. That Jesus will sanctify them in the truth.

“What do we do now?”

It’s a more common question than we’d like to admit. And when you are asking it, there is rarely just one answer. And we are rarely thinking our best when we are asking it. And one of the reasons that call mom is often an answer, if because if nothing else, mom loves us.

Open the scriptures. However much mom loves you, your Heavenly Father loves you more. Remember the ways and promises of God. There is nothing in the world that you have to fear. Christ is risen and has put his name on you. Confess that we don’t always know what we are doing. Today, I see through a glass darkly.

But most of all, have faith. Luther in his pungent way would say “sin boldly.” If God can redeem the acts of Judas for his people, surely he will make something good out of those who intend good. We have not been abandoned. We have been given a mission. We have been sent into the world. That we might be sanctified and know the full joy. Have faith in what the Father has laid out in advance for you to walk in.