

Senior Sunday Sermon
The Fifth Sunday of Easter
Sunday, May 10, 2020
Sophie Pauti

Good morning everyone!! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sophie Pauti and I am a senior at Memphis Central High School. Thursday, March 12th was the day we found out that spring break was going to be a week longer. I took this as a blessing from God himself, because I had been telling my mom "I'm tired of school, I am ready to walk across that stage and get that diploma today!!" Little did I know that March 12th would be my last day of high school. It's like the phrase 'be careful what you wish for' and I definitely have learned that lesson the hard way. Since that day I have been quarantined in my house, sitting and thinking about what the future holds for me and the rest of the world. Will this pandemic affect the people I love the most? Will it allow me to go to college in the fall? Will there be a vaccine by the end of 2020? Will the world ever go back to normal? What's next?

In this week's gospel, the disciples were also going through a similar period of doubt and worry. They had been betrayed by one of their own, and their leader was leaving them. Everything had changed for them and they were unsure of what was next. Reading this, I realized that the text was not only about life after death, but what's going on in the present day. We get comfortable following the path laid out for us in our daily lives that it is hard to know what to do when all of that falls apart. In the gospel Philip ask Jesus "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." And Jesus responds, and you can tell he is a bit annoyed by Philip's request, saying "How can you say, "Show us the Father"? 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 work." The disciples, like us, would like a clear answer and a specific path to follow, but we are forced to rely on our own instincts and trust in our faith.

I have attended Calvary for as long as I can remember...Going to Sunday school to listen to the stories that were told with wooden figures and a sandbox, which at the time seemed like watching a 3D Pixar movie...Then moving up to middle school Sunday school where we tried to really understand the meaning of the lessons and gospel through skits and conversation...To today, where in high school Sunday school we try to relate the stories and lessons to our own lives and what people go through every day. Through the years I have followed this path that the church has set for its members to walk through without ever questioning God or the Bible. Until I hit about 15, where I started to question everything that involved the church. I never said anything to anybody, until one day during Sunday school my cousin Madeline and I were sitting in the corner trying to comprehend the lesson and she leaned to me and said "I'm not sure if there is a God" and I was completely blown away! I was just astonished by the fact that I was not the only person who questioned religion, but what made it better was that I wasn't the only person who still went to church and questioned religion. (Even though not going to church was not an option according to our moms). I was happy that I had someone to talk to about this. Although we talked about how we questioned if there really was a God or not, we still got excited to go to church every Wednesday and Sunday. Sitting in pews during "big church" to going to

Wednesday night Genesis maker lab with Tom and Hilary were markers of our week, and things we really looked forward to. The sense of community in this building is what makes me excited to come to this church all the time. A couple of weeks ago during our Sunday School zoom call, we talked about how the pandemic has affected our lives and the way we have interacted with others. Even though we were not at church, we were all grateful that we are able to continue communicating regularly. During that call Gabbie said “It’s not a building that makes a church, but the people who make it.” I had never thought about it like that.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that he was leaving to prepare a place for them in God’s kingdom. Saying “And you know the way to the place where I am going” and naturally Thomas was confused saying “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” and Jesus answers “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

I didn’t know then that I didn’t need hard core evidence to know if there was a God to experience the power of love and community. Like Jesus’s disciples, it is okay to not know the way or be unsure about a concept. Jesus’s message to his disciples is that he will set the path ahead for them, but they themselves would have find it and follow it on their own. This is important for me to remember as I grow and develop my own journey in faith. In fact, we are all caught in an uncharted position today. We could never have imagined that our paths would lead to something as major as this pandemic. I never thought I would see the pews in church empty on a Sunday morning. I never thought things would change so drastically that I wouldn’t be able to hug my grandparents or extended family members. This is an unpredictable time where we are all unsure of the future, but what we can be sure of is our love for each other as a community, and God’s love for us. I am so grateful for my experiences I have had at Calvary and the love shared by all in this faith community. I would like to give a sincere thank you to everyone who has helped me through my journey at Calvary.