John 14:1-14

May 2, 1999

I have never been to England. As far as what my eyes have seen, my hands touched, England may not even exist. For all I know all those pictures and history books and videos could be a great hoax. I have never been to England.

But some of you have been there. If I believe your word, your words, what I have never seen, never touched becomes real for me.

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me. 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? And if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going."

Father's house. Dwelling places. A place for you. Jesus was speaking to his disciples of what they had never seen. Never touched.

Father's house. A young boy Jesus had gone to the Father's house - the temple in Jerusalem. My house shall be called a house of prayer Jesus cried as he chased the moneychangers from the temple. Was Jesus speaking of this house, God's dwelling on earth, the temple? But there are no other dwelling places in the temple. Jesus must have been speaking of something else.

Long ago people looked up and thought they were seeing the heavens. We call that "space" now. The universe.

I go to prepare a place for you and will take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.

Before there were cameras or videos, those who had not been there could see only through the words that painted pictures of far off places. Yet Jesus never paints a picture with his words. Those who have had life after life experiences tell all about what they saw or felt. Jesus is silent about whatever
happened between the moment of his death and his greeting his own on Easter. The few words he spoke to his disciples following his resurrection were of peace, forgiving, power that he would give to them.

So we are left with a few words: Father’s house, dwelling places, place for you. Whatever more we think of comes from our imagination.

Thomas said to Jesus, “Lord we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way? We do not know where the Father’s house is, or the dwelling places, or the place prepared for you, for me.

But Jesus answered Thomas, I am the way, 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 want to know all about heaven. I’d like a picture of the accommodations there. A map to outline the route. A schedule of daily activities there. But Jesus says, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.

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

If we can’t have a map, at least show us God. Tell of God. A description. A picture of words.

But Jesus responded, “Have I been with you all this time Philip, and you still do not know me?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Sometimes I think the disciples had it made. They got to see Jesus in the flesh. They were privileged to touch him, to hear his voice, to witness his power. What more could you ask?

But the disciples wanted more: Show us the way, show us the Father.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Jesus is everything. He is not the way to some truth which leads to life. He is not a tourist that can tell all about some special place. Jesus is himself the life, himself the God you seek, himself all truth, himself the way. Jesus is everything you seek.
Sometimes we talk about Jesus as if he is important to us only because of what he does for us. Like a mother who is loved because she cooks good meals. As if the meals were what really is loved, the mother valued only because of them. And love may start that way I suppose. But where there is love even as a mother lies dying, never to cook another meal or give another gift, a child’s heart is wed to her. Loves her.

There is not some life, some heaven, some glory that is the real prize. Jesus is the real prize. He loves you. He died on the cross so that he could dwell in you. Not simply walk beside you or be worshipped in some house of God but in his Holy Spirit make of your body his temple, his dwelling. And in his body, the Church, to make of you a member of his own self.

One day beyond your death you will be in Jesus, in the Father’s house, fully. There will be no distance, no separation, no you that is not fully and completely Jesus’, no part of God that is not fully and completely Jesus’.

Until that day, says Jesus, do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me.

Amen.