

Judas asks Jesus a question. Why are you not going to show yourself to the world? I resonate with Judas' question. The disciples have taken up the call and followed Jesus. They have left behind family and friends. They have abandoned careers so that they can follow the teachings of Christ. Jesus has entered Jerusalem and has been proclaimed the Messiah. People have assumed that this means that he will overthrow the Roman oppressors of the Jewish People. Some people are overjoyed, and others don't believe him to be the Son of God. He doesn't look like what they imagined. He doesn't look like the Savior. He has gathered them all together for a meal. This would have been common throughout their time together, but this isn't just any meal. This is the last meal they will share before he is taken and crucified. He has news to tell them. He will be leaving them. The disciples are shocked. This shouldn't have come as a surprise if they had been listening to his teachings. Not too unlike my students, when they come to class and I tell them there is a quiz (regardless of how many times I told them the previous class period or wrote it on the board), they are always caught off guard. The disciples are, to put it mildly, dismayed and possibly feeling a little betrayed. They have given up everything to follow him, and now what?

The disciples are faced with too many questions to even put into words. I find myself in both sides of this equation often. Like Jesus, as a teacher, I am called on often to answer questions. They are usually of the classroom sort... Can I use the bathroom? What page are we on? Will there be a quiz? Can I use my cell phone? However, like the disciples, I also am the one asking questions... Have you finished the assignment? Do you need help? Are you okay? It is important to ask questions rather than make assumptions and to listen just as much to what isn't being said as to what my students are saying.

My students recently finished their Holocaust unit, and again, I am faced with questions I don't have answers to. How could this happen? Why didn't anyone stop it? I find this topic

harder with each passing year. The second year was harder because I had just had my daughter, and I didn't understand why people could commit such atrocities, and I still don't. This last year has been hard because I had the opportunity to go to Poland and walk through Auschwitz. It boggles the mind when you realize you are standing in a huge cemetery. Auschwitz is about the size of 6,000 football fields. My students read Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night*. It chronicles his personal experience throughout the Holocaust. He is also faced with questions about God. How does one maintain their faith in spite of such unspeakable hatred and destruction? My class always ends the unit by watching the interview that he gave to Oprah, where he returns and walks among the dead again. However, at the end of the interview, when asked what he does with his anger, he says that he writes and teaches, and his goal is to sensitize the reader and the student to the suffering of others. It is hard to sit with the suffering of those around us. We ask, what can we do? What difference could we make? Again, we are faced with the questions that don't seem to have clear answers. (Jesus sits in the pain of unanswerable questions)

What does Jesus do in the face of endless questions? Jesus, like every good teacher, has put together a substitute plan for his students/disciples while he is away. My students are the same. I see uncertainty in their faces whenever I am absent from the classroom. Again with the questions, who is our sub? What are the assignments? I always return to students who say they missed me...even the ones who I sometimes wonder whether they like me. This is because I work to build relationships with my students. They know that they can count on me. This reminds me of how uncertain the disciples feel about Jesus leaving. He says that he will send the Holy Spirit to them. It will not be the same, but the Holy Spirit will remind them of Jesus' teachings from his ministry here on earth and teach them new things. The text says that Jesus will send the Comforter, another name for the Holy Spirit. This also resonates, as there are times when the Christian life is very lonely. Jesus never promises the Disciples that their lives will be

free from pain and heartache. However, he does promise that the Holy Spirit will be there with us each step of the way. Reminding us of the lessons that we have learned. This is the next step in the journey for the disciples. But it still begs the question...Why does Jesus not set up his Kingdom here and now? The disciples (and Christians today) must walk the walk. Jesus says, those who love me will keep my commandments. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and Mind and love your neighbor as yourself." All too often, the words are spoken without thinking about their meaning. Sit, stand, kneel, and repeat throughout the service. It can be so easy to forget the meaning behind our service and not let the words wash over us. To allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us about our walk with God.

Jesus also says that he gives his disciples peace. I can only imagine that there were many voices talking at once when Jesus announced his news. When big changes are looming, it is hard to feel calm. However, it isn't that Jesus is saying that his disciples will be calm all the time throughout this chaos. Phil 4:7 references "peace that passes understanding." The peace that Jesus is promising is the understanding that in spite of all of the unrest around us, the politics that rage from both sides, life changes...we do not have to be in fear of the present or the future. God will remain in control. Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you. To prosper you and give you a hope for the future." God doesn't promise that everything will be easy, but he does promise that he has a plan.

So what, should we do when there are unanswerable questions? We must remain sensitive to the pain around us. We must remember the peace that is offered. And we must continue to ask the questions. Jesus is not threatened by uncomfortable questions. He doesn't offer easy answers. He does promise to be present along our journey. It is our work to continue to walk the path before us.