

“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

May the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O God our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

It's been a happy coincidence that I've spent most of my adult life,

Both here and in Toronto,

in churches named for St. Thomas.

A coincidence, because I've never purposefully sought out a St. Thomas's in these cities;

And a happy one, because I love Thomas.

Thomas is the only I identify with directly because, like him, I am so often oblivious to the plain truth in front of me.

Thomas represents the part of me that wants to do what's best

What's right

Even if I don't always know what it is or how to do it.

And contrary to nearly two-thousand years of tradition, I don't think Thomas's problem is that he doubts.

Rather, he is someone whose faith is like the rest of ours:

Deep. And flawed.

Thomas just kind of keeps misses what's obvious, even when it's directly in front of him.

Now I don't know about you, but I feel like this almost every day.

And it's a comfort to know that even when we do miss the point, God is still on our side, urging us on.

In our lesson from John this evening, Jesus tells his followers that he's going to his Father's house to prepare a place for them all, and, more importantly, that they already know the way.

Thomas, eager to be there in the Father's house with Jesus, blurts out the only response he can think of.

And it's a perfectly reasonable response:

"Lord, we don't actually know where you're going, so how can we know the way?"

I have a lot of fun imagining an exasperated Jesus who rolls his eyes before explaining to the disciples what they should already know:

"Thomas, *I* am the way, and the truth, and the life."

These words are almost second nature to us now, but to the earliest Christians they must have been shocking.

The only other reference to the Father's House in John's Gospel refers to the Temple with all its rules and regulations for the proper worship of God,

And where direct access to the Divine was limited to the priestly class.

And now here's Jesus, telling his followers:

You can know God, personally. You can be with God, in God's own home. But only if you follow me.

It is a radical departure for the people of Israel who, as Isaiah tells us, believe that only God is the Lord, apart from whom there is no saviour.

Thomas, in his eagerness, misses the point.

He fails to see who Jesus really is.

He fails to understand that he doesn't need any more guidance because he already has all that he needs in Jesus.

An ancient tradition, preserved in the early-third century Apocryphal text, *The Acts of Thomas*, tells the story of how Thomas brought Christianity to India, a lineage still claimed by Christian churches there to this day.

The story not only shows Thomas's inability to see the road laid out for him by God,

But it also redeems him, showing what is possible when we do all we can to follow God's call.

The *Acts of Thomas* begins with the Apostles "dividing the regions of the world so that each of them would have an allotted area" to spread the Gospel to.

But when Thomas's lot falls on India, he refuses to go saying, "Send me wherever else you wish – I'm not going to India!"

It's not until a resurrected Jesus appears and *sells Thomas into slavery* that he agrees to travel the path already laid out for him.

Once in India, however, Thomas does marvelous work.

He is hired by the King to build him a new palace, but Thomas takes the money and gives it to the poor instead.

The King is furious, until he learns that his unintended generosity has, in fact, built him a palace in heaven. The king and his family are then inspired to keep doing good, giving aid to all those in need.

As followers of Christ, we've all professed that there is one crucified and risen Lord, one faith, and one baptism in Jesus.

The cost of that discipleship is that we've also agreed to follow God wherever we are led.

Sometimes, like Thomas, we miss the obvious signs in front of us.

But if we follow them when we do see them, God is capable of doing remarkable things through us. _____

In the early 1600's, the English priest, George Herbert, wrote a poem which he named "The Call."

Almost three hundred years later it was set to music by Vaughan Williams and eventually made its way into the hymnal.

Its text can, I think, be easily interpreted as Thomas's response to Jesus' reminder that He is the way for us all, and makes a good prayer for us when we lose sight of the path ahead.

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life;
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
Such a Life, as killeth death.

Amen.