

**Christ Church, Georgetown**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 7, 2017**  
**The Rev. Alyse Viaggiano**

**Prayer: O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing.**

Your phone chirps, you have received a tweet. It's a notification from Twitter that reads, "Far East Taco Grille (food truck): starting at 8 pm, dollar tacos located off of 2th and L, come and get some. We run out fast!"

It's already 8:30 pm, you've got to kick it into high gear if you're going to get one of those dollar tacos. So the journey begins. You hop into your car, weave in and out of traffic, magically find a parking spot, jump out of your car and begin to sprint towards the designated location. Taco heaven is within your reach. It's now 9:30 pm and every millennial in DC has had the same idea. The line to order a dollar taco stretches three blocks.

It's intimidating, but they're still taking orders, and you're dedicated. An hour later, you finally reach the counter when a sign goes up. The person in front of you just ordered the last taco, out of tacos. Curse words roll off your tongue. It's 11 pm. You turn around to head home, hungry and frustrated. The novelty of this trend is no longer amusing, and you think to yourself, "What was the point of that?!"

I imagine this is how the skeptics of Jesus felt when they first heard about him as the God incarnate and his miracles. They heard of all that was going on and eager to catch a glimpse of the shiny, new prophet popping up around town. They wanted to learn more, but instead they almost saw and they almost touched. Which led them to become so infuriated they simply stopped listening and forgot why they were even making the effort in the first place.

But there is a flaw in that attempt to follow Jesus. If we look at how the apostles followed Jesus, they didn't simply follow because he performed miracles and healings, or because he was the latest trending prophet of the time. It's more than that.

Perhaps by examining another style of restaurant, we can understand a different reason to follow.

It's a busy Friday night. You have a long standing 6 pm reservation at your favorite restaurant, the oldest one in town. Unfortunately, the project your working on has made miss it entirely. Suddenly, your phone rings, and it's the maître d from the restaurant. They're calling because they're worried that something has happened to you. You let them know that you're working late, and they respond that they'll keep a seat open for you whenever you arrive. It's 9 pm, you've finished the project and you're starving, but you aren't sure if the restaurant is still serving food that late. You convince yourself its worth a shot, and head directly to the restaurant.

You walk through the front door, and the maître d immediately embraces you and promptly takes you to your favorite table. It's perfectly placed, and the servers offer a friendly hello as they pass by. As you begin to settle in, they bring you your usual dish. And it dawns on you, "They really care for me here, it's like coming home."

The pop up taco truck is looking to make the quick buck. Whereas the established restaurant wants to ensure you feel cared for. Here in lies the difference.

Unlike the food truck, Jesus is not a novelty and Jesus is not a trend. Jesus is the comforting, established restaurant standing as the maître d, inviting us in, going ahead of us, and leading us to our seat at the table.

This is just how the God incarnate acts. Both as the gatekeeper and the shepherd. In both roles, God is welcoming, directing and protecting all those entering and existing the sheepfold through the proper gate. It is the ultimate comfort to know that God is never going anywhere, and is always going to call us back when we stray.

Well, how brilliant. It looks like we've arrived and entered through the right gate, so now it's time to simply settle in, right? Just when we thought we were comfortable, we look around, and notice the rest of the sheep.

They don't totally look like us.

Everyone is grazing, sure, but there is a sheep in corner chewing so loud you can hear them across the pasture. And another keeps bumping into others. Another is eating more than their share. And another has bad breath. And another smells really bad. And suddenly, it's really frustrating to be inside the fence.

But that's the beauty of being in community.

Every one of us is called to be inside the fence, regardless of who we are, what we do, who we know. God has chosen each of us to be a part of the sheepfold, and our lives are to be a reflection of how Christ leads us. This is hard work God calls us into, and we are to ask ourselves how are we following Christ in the world?

Over the last two years, I've seen that question answered by this remarkable flock of Christ Church. Every Sunday this community of disciples sets aside differences to worship, learn, and eat under the same roof in order to become more centered on Christ. It's been an honor and a privilege to serve such a community. Thank you.

The grace in all this, is even when we stray to follow the trend, God calls us back. Back into the crazy Christian fold in order to graze together on the bread of life. It's a comfort to know that God will never cancel our reservation, and when we do finally show up there will be a seat for us at the table.

Amen.

