

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea,  
Gibson Island, Maryland, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, May 12, 2019, Mothers Day**

I am calling today “No Duh Sunday.” It’s an odd theme perhaps for Mother’s Day. But I’ll explain. Stay with me.

The word “duh” isn’t really a word. It’s an expression. Often we use it to put down someone when they say something that we feel is so obvious.”

I say to you “the world is round.” You say to me “duh.”  
I say to you that there are 12 months in a year. You say to me “duh.” I say to you “there are lots of things to do on Gibson Island.” You say to me “duh.”

But what if I say to you “Jesus and the Father are one.” **(John 10:22-30)** I’m pretty certain that this statement will get a response, but it won’t be “duh” as in “that’s obvious.” Here are some more likely responses to the contention that Jesus and the Father are one.

“What did you say?”

“Where did that come from?”

“Who told you that?”

“I beg your pardon.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You’ve got to be kidding.”

“How is that possible?”

The reason that “duh” is not an appropriate response to “Jesus and the Father are one” is because we’re not sure whether it’s true or not. Take the most devout person in the world, and ask if they are certain beyond any doubt that Jesus and the Father are one. Press that person just a bit, and the person will probably acknowledge some doubt. Likewise, take the greatest skeptic in the world and ask if they are certain that Jesus and the Father are not one.” That person too might well acknowledge some doubt. Not much, mind you, but a little.

In the absence of certainty, “duh” doesn’t apply. Other things might apply, but not “duh.”

You and I believe that Jesus and the Father are one. Are we absolutely certain? Maybe 99 percent certain, maybe 75 percent, maybe 50 percent. But probably not 100 percent. The same case can be made for those who do not believe that Jesus and the Father are one. Thoughtful people on this end of the belief spectrum wouldn't preclude the possibility even when their experiences suggest otherwise.

Well, if this assessment of faith and skepticism is true, a wonderful opportunity presents itself. The opportunity is called dialogue.

There's a very interesting dialogue in this morning's lesson from Revelation **(Revelation 7:9-17)**.

The author notes that "there is a great multitude ... from every nation ... and they cried out in a loud voice saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb.'"

In response to this "great multitude," an elder says, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" The answer is, "Sir, you are the one that knows." And, sure enough, the elder explains: "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal."

I suspect that most of us have been in dialogue about our faith with someone. And, if not with someone else, at least with ourselves. And, at some point in the conversation, particularly when the listener is confused by what we say, we respond with something like "Sir, or madam, you are the one that knows."

We turn the conversation back to the other person. Not because we think it's a clever thing to do, but because we are sure that the person has had some kind of experience that, if examined, will help the person understand where we are coming from.

The other person doesn't say "duh," and neither do we. We try to find some common ground, like how things began, what's the purpose of life, if there is no God, why is it that we instinctively wonder about God, why does the Story of Jesus touch so many people over so many centuries.

There are all sorts of potential points of dialogue entry that can lead to more dialogue.

One possible point of entry is the existence of healing. Everybody has had some kind of healing experience. Maybe good, maybe not so good. But the whole notion of wellness is common ground.

The Book of Acts is full of healing stories. In today's lesson (**Acts 9:36-43**), the agent of healing is not Jesus, as one would expect, but Peter. He's a fisherman. What's he doing healing people?

Maybe the person we're speaking with is a professional healer. And, no doubt, they have some really interesting experiences, some of which even they cannot explain. Or, perhaps they entered the profession because of someone in their family who was healed, or perhaps not healed.

If you're engaged in a serious conversation about healing, "duh" is not part of that conversation. Something else, someone else, might be involved, a possibility that not only promotes dialogue, but sustains it.

In this morning's Collect and Psalm (**Psalm 23**) and Gospel, there is a Good Shepherd theme. The notion of the Lord as the Good Shepherd is universally appealing. What's not to like about hearing the voice of the Creator, or having one's soul revived and guided along right pathways, or being called by our very own name?

Again, this is not "duh" stuff. This is the stuff of a better life, whatever the circumstances are now. Things can be better if we follow the Good Shepherd. He's there, with his staff, capable of overcoming even stubbornness.

You and I are, or should be, still in the glow of Easter morning. Jesus lives! Christ is risen! Not to be put away until next year, but shared in really thoughtful ways with those who are curious, those who are hurting, those who would love to share their blessings if they had a clearer understanding of the Source of all blessings.

There is work to be done. Plenty of it. And sometimes the work begins in dialogue. You never know what will transpire. We don't even know our own strength as dialoguers. What we do know is that we have a partner in this sharing endeavor, the One to whom we and others can turn to acknowledge a blessing or confess an error or express confusion or anything else under the Sun.

Plus, we have one another, a really special blessing in itself. Private prayer is powerful. But so is corporate prayer. Hence our motto: "No 'duh' here."

Now, back to Mothers' Day. Here's a present for Mom, and it's in the form of advice for children and grandchildren and, yes, for spouses. Here you go:

Never, ever, under any circumstances, respond to Mom, whatever she says, with "Duh." Remember, no "duh" here.

Amen.