

In the Driver's Seat

A homily preached by Jennifer A. Hudson at St. Paul's on the Green Episcopal Church, May 25, 2017.

Ephesians 1: 15-23; Luke 24: 44-53

Have you ever had a recurring dream? When I was a little girl, I had one about a car ride gone wrong. I was in the backseat. My mother had been driving and my father had been seated next to her. They suddenly disappeared and the car went out of control. Next I found myself in the driver's seat, panicking, not knowing how to operate a vehicle that, to a child, seemed massive. I woke up in a sweat. Now, however, when seated behind the wheel of my Mustang, I'm pretty daring!

I wonder how the disciples must have felt the day of Jesus' ascension, which we commemorate today. Luke's account of the event, the only detailed one out of the four gospels, tells us they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. I wonder, however, if they didn't feel apprehension, even terror. After all, it's really been a mind-blowing set of events they've witnessed: Their beloved teacher was brutally put to death, his tomb was found empty, and he's appeared to them in unusual ways. Now he promises a power from on high, blesses, then leaves them alone in their respective driver's seats with the charge of spreading the Good News. How could they not feel overwhelmed? Frightened? Unsure of what obstacles they might face while attempting to fulfill their roles in God's mission?

Being asked to assume a new role is scary. Consider the new director of a division, the person who has become single again after a long relationship, the new leader of a town committee. Finding one's self in the driver's seat demands a shift in perspective. It also

demands creativity and openness, resilience and courage. Above all, it demands trust and faith.

All too often, though, we doubt ourselves and what we're capable of doing. Yet if we don't take risks, if we don't stretch ourselves beyond our comfort zones, we won't go anywhere or discover the exact stuff of which we're made. As NHRA drag racer John Force puts it, "If you stand still, you're going to get run over."

We're made of God and God invites us into daring movement. New roles are frightening but they also can bring us closer to fulfillment and completeness. After all, that's not only God's recurring dream for us; it's also our very own dream deep down for ourselves. How fast or slow we go, what streets we turn onto in order to reach our full potential is entirely up to us. But we're never alone in our choices. As Paul explains in Ephesians, God gives us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation" for fuel.

What would our lives look like if we trusted our built-in navigation system called the Spirit to guide our decisions, align our abilities, and move us toward our higher good? Dream, my friends, then fuel up, grab the wheel, and dare. We've got a good co-pilot, one who will make sure we never get run over.