

JESUS IS THE WAY

John 14:1-31

Key Verse 14:5

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

At the end of the previous passage, Jesus’ disciples received devastating news: that very night, Judas Iscariot would betray Jesus (13:20-30), and Simon Peter would disown him (13:38). Worst of all, Jesus was going away, leaving them behind (13:33,36). They believed that Jesus was the Promised Messiah- the King of Israel and the Son of God (1:41,45,49). So they had left everything to follow him. They had lived with Jesus twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They had walked together, talked together, eaten together, laughed together and even cried together. When Jesus said he was going away, they felt sick. How could he leave them? Why couldn't they go with him? What were they supposed to do without him? They felt lost, directionless and afraid. We often feel the same way. Jesus understands exactly how we feel. So he helps us by giving us one word of God: **“I am the way and the truth and the life.”** How can this statement answer all of our questions?

First, the way to the Father's house (1-6). Read verse 1. **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.”** Jesus’ disciples wanted him to make their problems go away, but Jesus had another way to calm their troubled hearts: **“Believe in me.”** Faith has content. So Jesus told his disciples what they needed to believe: **“My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am”** (2-3). Jesus understood his disciples perfectly. He knew that they were worried about their future security, so he promised them, **“I am going to prepare a place for you in my Father’s house.”**

Before they met Jesus, his disciples probably worried all the time. When they were in high school, they worried that they wouldn't get into a good college. In college, they worried that they wouldn't graduate. As they neared graduation, they worried about finding a good job, getting a promotion, then about finding the right husband or wife. After they had kids, they had a whole new set of worries.... It seemed that every time they solved one problem, a new one came up to take its place, so they never ran out of things to worry about. Then they met Jesus. Jesus didn't have any of the things they thought they needed to feel safe and secure. He

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had no savings, no job; he didn't even have a room of his own to lay his head at night (Mt 8:20). However, when they were with Jesus, they didn't worry about anything. They trusted that Jesus would take care of everything, and- somehow- Jesus always did. Now, however, when Jesus said he was going away, all their worries and anxieties came flooding back. What was going to happen to them? How were they going to survive? It seemed that they had wasted the past three and a half years of their lives for nothing! They thought the problem was that Jesus was going away. The real problem, however, was that they had put their hopes in this world, where there is no real security (Mt 6:19).

Many people envy Donald Trump. He's rich and famous, and has had two beautiful wives. I, however, don't envy him at all, because his wealth has three fatal flaws. First of all, his worldly treasures cannot really satisfy the deepest needs of his soul, so he is always striving for more, and more, and more. Secondly, his worldly treasures are perishable; his money can be stolen, his fame can be lost and his pretty wife might decide to leave him for another man. Even if she never leaves him, she is getting older every day – losing her outer beauty and reminding him that his own life span is limited. Finally, Mr. Trump's wealth will be useless to him when he dies. Deep down in his heart, his biggest fear must be that there is a God who will hold him accountable for everything he has done in this life.

Jesus helped his disciples find absolute security in this world, by assuring them that he would prepare a permanent place for them in his Father's house. Nobody wants to die. We might think that a ninety year-old man has lived a full life, but he would say, "I'm too young to die!" However, we don't have to be afraid of dying if we can be sure that when we leave this world we will go to the Father's house. What's so great about the Father's house?

The Presidential Suite in the Raj Palace Hotel in Jaipur, India costs \$45,000 per night. It has 16,000 ft² (1500 m²) of space spread over four floors, a private roof terrace, a swimming pool and its own private museum. On the other hand, my whole house is only 1/10 as big and it has no swimming pool or museum. Even so, my daughter plans to stay in our in house for the rest of her life- not because it's such a great house, but because she wants to live with her mommy, her sister and me. In the same way, Jesus' disciples were not attracted to the kingdom of God because it has golden streets or gates of pearl, but because they could live there with Jesus forever.

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True paradise is not laying on a beach in California. Our Father's house is true paradise, because Jesus is there. Some people think Jesus is boring, because he never sinned. They don't know Jesus. Jesus' disciples had experienced his tender care and thirst-quenching love. They had found true paradise just being with him. When they were with Jesus they didn't worry about anything. When they were with Jesus, they were happy- truly, deeply completely happy. Anyone who really knows Jesus feels the same way.

Look at verses 4 and 5. Thomas wanted to live with Jesus, but he had a problem: he didn't know where Jesus was going, so he didn't know how to get there! Actually, Jesus had already told him the way (3,4), but Thomas had missed it. So Jesus told him again. Read verse 6. **“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”** The ‘way’ to our Father's house isn't a route or a set of instructions: it is Jesus himself! When I was a child, my grandparents lived on a farm more than a hundred miles from our home. I didn't know how to drive or even read a map, but I knew how to get to their farm: I got into the back seat of my parents' car and three hours later I got out at the farm! In the same way, I know the way to my Father's house: Jesus will take me to be with him there (3,6). That's all I need to know.

It is popular today to say that there are many ways to God. Personally, I like this idea, but is it true? Jesus said, **“No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Did he really mean to say that he is the only way to God? Yes, that is exactly what he meant to say. It sounds too exclusive, too absolute. Jesus did not make this statement to denigrate another religion; he said it because it's the truth. The fundamental obstacle that blocks our way to God is not ignorance: our problem is not that we cannot find the path to God. No. The fundamental obstacle is the sin that defiles us (Isa 59:2). We cannot go to God on our own, because our sin makes us enemies of God: We would arrive only to be destroyed by his perfect holiness (Mt 22:11-13). God is perfect in holiness, righteousness and justice, but he is also perfect in his love. There was no way for us to come to God on our own, so he made a way by sending Jesus!

Look at verse 6 again. **“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life.’”** Jesus is the way for lost sinners to come to God. He is also the truth and he is the life. ‘Truth’ is more than just facts and ‘life’ is more than mere existence. When Jesus said, **“I am the truth,”** he meant that he is the source of all truth. He is the Creator who wrote the laws that govern the universe. He is Holy God who wrote the standard of righteousness by which all people are measured. When Jesus

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said, **“I am the life”** he meant that he is the source of all life- both biological and spiritual. Death has no power over him! In our world, in order to have mercy, we have to compromise justice, but Jesus is the way and the truth and the life all at the same time. He made a way for sinners to come to God without compromising God’s perfect righteousness. Instead, he paid the penalty for our sins: he saved us in truth. Jesus did not avoid death: he was raised from the dead, defeating the power of death over us, because he is the life. Jesus is the only way for sinners to come to God because there is no one else who could save us in this way. He is the only way to God, but he isn’t exclusive: He came to save Jews and Gentiles, women and men, Africans, Asians, Europeans, Australians and North and South Americans.

Second, the way to know God (7-31). Jesus is the way to the Father’s house. He is also the way for us to know the Father, even while we live in this world (7). Look at verse 8. Philip said, **“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”** The New English Translation (NET) captures the sense of Philip’s words: **“Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content.”** Jesus’ disciples had followed him because they wanted to know God. They had grown up going to Jewish synagogue. They believed in Creator God, but they didn’t know him. They thought that if they could know God, then they could find the meaning and purpose and satisfaction they craved in their lives.

Philip thought that in order to know God he had to have some kind of supernatural experience. He wanted God to appear before him in a burning bush, as he had done for Moses. He wanted to hear God’s voice in his ears and feel the earth tremble beneath his feet. How did Jesus help him? Look at verse 9. **“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say ‘Show us the Father?’”** Philip didn’t need to ‘see’ the Father in order to know him. He already knew the Father because he knew Jesus (1:18). Jesus spoke the words the Father had given him to say. Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead by the Father’s power. Jesus loved a thirsty Samaritan woman with the Father’s love (10-11). Jesus is the way for us to know God, even as we live in this world.

Human beings are unique in God’s creation. We have a physical nature that we share with other animals. We alone, however, have a spiritual nature that we share with God. God created us in his own image so that we could know him, love him and live in a right relationship with him (Gen 1:27). Even if we have good food, a safe place to live, warm clothes and a loving family- if we don’t know God

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we will never be satisfied in our inner souls. As long as Adam and Eve lived in a right relationship with God, they were very happy. However, when they sinned against God their relationship with him was broken, and their lives degenerated into a desperate struggle to survive. Since then, all people have followed in their cursed footsteps. In the United States, we have been able to produce abundant food and amass great wealth, but we are still not satisfied. We have only transitioned from a meaningless struggle to survive to a vain pursuit of worldly power and pleasure. We cannot find the meaning and satisfaction we crave in this way.

One young woman thought that she could find the way to happiness through her career. She worked hard and graduated with a computer science degree from MIT. She got a high-paying job in Silicon Valley and made “buckets of money”. One day, her boss gave her a promotion and a big raise. That evening she went home and cried. She had achieved everything she wanted, but it was not enough.

David Livingstone was the first Christian missionary to the interior of Africa. In the course of his mission, he was blinded in one eye, and one of his arms was paralyzed by a lion's attack. His health was ruined by countless tropical illnesses. For most of his missionary life he was alone - having sent his wife and children back to Scotland. We might feel that he sacrificed too much for the work of God, but he didn't think so. He said, “People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God...? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?... It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege.... I never made a sacrifice.”¹ The great tragedy of life is not that we must endure suffering or hardship, but that our suffering and hardship accomplish nothing. After he died, Dr. Livingstone's body was carried through the streets of London to Westminster Abbey. One man was surprised to see his friend weeping openly, and asked if he had known Dr. Livingstone. The man replied, “I weep not for Livingstone but for myself. He lived and died for something, but I have lived for nothing.”²

Knowing God is experiencing Jesus personally. How can we experience Jesus personally? Read verse 12. **“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”** Jesus said that if we believe in him, we can do the same works he had done! Wow! What a glorious promise! Jesus' disciples performed some of the same miracles that Jesus had done - they healed

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the sick and even raised the dead. Jesus' ministry was confined to the nation of Israel, but his disciples would extend the work of salvation to the whole world. We also can do even greater things than Jesus did - not in quality, but in quantity. Look at verses 13-14. Jesus' disciples can only do this great work through prayer, because only Jesus can do the work of God through his disciples: **“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”** When we experience the power of prayer in Jesus' name we can know God more intimately and personally. This gives us true satisfaction and meaning in life.

In verses 15-31, Jesus tells how he would be with his disciples forever: It is through the Holy Spirit. Verse 18 says, **“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”** In the past, they had lived with Jesus as man to man; now he would live in them through the Holy Spirit. Jesus had been their advocate. Now the Holy Spirit would be their advocate. He would dwell in them when they obeyed Jesus' words (15). He would remind them of Jesus' words and enable them to understand them (25-26). He would give them Jesus' peace (27) in the midst of any trouble. Our relationship with Jesus begins when we trust in him for the forgiveness of our sins. Our relationship deepens and grows as we continue to trust in him to carry out his work through us. For example, we first taste Jesus' love through his sacrifice on the cross, but we can experience his love and grace more deeply as he lives in us and works in us to take care of one precious Bible student.

Like Jesus' disciples, we face many troubles as we live in this world, but we do not have to let our hearts be troubled by them. If we believe that Jesus is the way to the Father's house, then we know that our future destiny is secure in paradise. If we believe that Jesus is the way to know God, then we can enjoy a rich and satisfying relationship with him. If we believe that Jesus dwells in us through the Holy Spirit, then we can grow in a closer relationship with him as he accomplishes his great purpose for our lives.

Even as a young boy I felt driven to accomplish something great with my life. So I denied myself many ordinary pleasures and worked hard. I graduated from UW-Madison as the top engineering graduate and was accepted in a Ph.D. program at UC-Berkeley on a National Science Foundation fellowship. It seemed that everything was going according to my plan, but I felt empty and hopeless. From time to time, I even considered suicide. However, during my last year at Madison, I began to study the Bible. I was shocked to realize that I was a sinner. At the same time, however, I was happy to find that Jesus had suffered and died to

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save me from my sins. I was liberated from all my guilt and shame and the love of God flooded my heart and soul. As I continued to study the Bible, I found the true purpose for my life in God's calling to serve campus evangelism at UC-Berkeley. My life in Berkeley has not turned out as I expected. I never finished my Ph.D. thesis. Instead of becoming a renowned professor, I am a math teacher at a poor, inner city high school. However, I am happier than I could ever have imagined, because I have found that Jesus is the way. He is the way to salvation. He has cleansed me from my sins and satisfied my thirsty heart. He is the way for me to know God personally - and in God I have found the meaning and joy and purpose of my life. My career as a teacher has not always worked out the way I hoped, but the purpose of my life is clear: to help Berkeley students find Jesus is the way for them as well. Humanly, they seem to have everything they could ever want. They are all handsome, beautiful and smart. They are hard-working and ambitious. But they are lost and directionless. Like me, they don't know why they are working so hard and they are anxious about the future. I pray that God may use me to help them find the way and the truth and the life in Jesus.

Read verse 6. **“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’”**

¹ speech to students at Cambridge University (4 December 1857), as quoted at http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/David_Livingstone

² <http://lesliepuryear.blogspot.com/2011/04/david-livingstone.html>