

LIFE IN HIS NAME

JESUS IS THE WAY

John 14:1-11

As you turn to John Chapter 14, we will be in verses 1 through 11. I just want to tell you what you may have already figured out. We are in the process of redoing our stage lighting. We are doing that so that we will be able to stream on-line, so you won't even have to come here anymore. It will just be live streamed. You know, you will be able to see me internationally on TV. Okay, that is not what's happening, but we will be streaming on-line. We want to make this available just to widen the ministry of the Word, so we needed to improve the lighting on the stage. And if you are having trouble -- some reflection, lights shining in your eyes -- we want to know that because we will improve it. Just fill it out on a card or see Adam Pizarro. All complaints: please go to Adam Pizarro, not me.

John Chapter 14, verses 1-11:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.”

We continue, now, our study in the gospel of John. We stopped this study right before Thanksgiving. We took time for Thanksgiving, Christmas, then a New Year’s vision series, and then

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Easter. Now we are returning to our study in the gospel of John and this will carry us into the summer. The plan is to complete the gospel of John by the end of the summer.

I don't know if you saw this in the news, but the last person known to have been born in the 1800's died this month. Her name was Emma Morano. She lived in a little town in Italy and she was 117 years old -- 117. She died peacefully on April 15. The cause of death was old age. The last time she left her apartment, though she was generally in good health, was 15 years ago. The priest who buried her was a young man of 91. He remarked at her funeral service that she was known for simplicity. She wasn't caught up in consumerism. She lived in a church apartment for the last 27 years of her life.

And of course, the question everyone asks is: What was the secret of her longevity? She gave two things: She ate three raw eggs every day, and she didn't have a husband. That's the truth. The lack of a husband and raw eggs makes one evidently live a long time. Some of you would say, "Okay, I'm on my way to the grocery market afterward and the divorce attorney tomorrow."

That is not the message at all. Obviously, we really don't know why she lived to be 117. But it's a fascinating question, because who wouldn't want to live to be that old if they were in good health? In fact, we are preoccupied, aren't we, as a culture, in finding out how to live healthy and to live longer?

Well, this passage tells us that Jesus is the way. Jesus is the way to eternal life. Now, very importantly, this passage tells us much more than that. In fact, I would suggest that many times the church has miscommunicated this message (hopefully not this church) often. But there have been times when pastors or evangelists would stand and proclaim a message: "Come to Jesus and live forever." The message would be that simple. And I'm afraid that that message is unclear, because Jesus is not just wanting to give us eternal life -- he is wanting to give us himself. He is wanting to show us the Father.

When we understand that Jesus is life itself, that Jesus is truth, Jesus is the way, we begin to understand that it's about more than just continuing to exist. This verse, John Chapter 14, verse 6, is somewhat of a famous verse. It's often quoted. It is quoted because it carries a very important truth -- a cardinal truth that summarizes everything about Christianity. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. It's somewhat controversial because in saying that Jesus adds: "No one comes to the Father except through me." There is a claim of exclusivity, that Jesus is not only the way to the

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Father, he is the only way. He is not only the way to eternal life, he is the only way. We will talk about what that means and the challenge of exclusivity in the message from this text.

But before we do, let's just set up the main idea. I've given the title to this message: Jesus Is the Way. What I want to communicate to you is that of those three descriptions -- Jesus is the way, he is the truth, he is the life -- the passage gives prominence to the first. You see that very clearly in the context. Jesus is comforting the disciples and he tells them they know the way. There is this interaction that takes place with Thomas. Thomas says, "We don't know where you are going. How do we know the way?" Then Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And then that exclusion: "No one comes to the Father except through me." It makes it clear that in this statement Jesus is describing himself as the way. He is answering Thomas' question, and the theme throughout the passage is that Jesus the way.

So, the ideas of Jesus being the truth and Jesus being the life are slightly subordinate. They are not less important. In a sense, you could say the context renders the meaning that Jesus is the way because he is the truth of God, because he is the life of God. Because he is truth, because he is the resurrection and the life, Jesus is the way.

You could look to 1 Timothy 2:5 as a summary of what is taught in this passage. "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." That's the central idea. Jesus is the mediator between God and man. This verse here in 1 Timothy has a way of kind of challenging us. It troubles you a little bit when you read it because of the emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. We know that Jesus is human, he is a man, but he's also divine. He is God. He is the Son of God. But the emphasis here is that he's a man. The reason is because in his role as mediator he connects man to the Father and the Father to mankind. In order to do that, he had to become a man. In his humanity, he assumes the role of mediator and our high priest, representing us to the Father as he represents the Father to us. So, Jesus is the way. He is the mediator. He's the only way.

We will break it down into four parts. Let me give you an outline of the passage:

- I. Jesus is the way to cure a troubled heart (verse 1).
- II. Jesus is the way to heaven (or to the eternal, would probably be more accurate) (verses 2-4).

- III. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (verses 5 and 6).
- IV. Jesus is the way to the Father (verses 7 through 11).

Jesus is the way to cure a troubled heart, the way to heaven, the way, the truth, and the life, and the way to the Father.

- I. Jesus is the way to cure a troubled heart.

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” When we ended this series back at the end of October, we looked at these first few verses and we looked at this theme, emphasizing that Jesus is the cure for fear and anxiety and depression and despair and all of the maladies that trouble the human heart. Remember that the setting is one where Jesus is on his way to the cross. Here we are, right before his betrayal, right before his crucifixion. He is ministering to the disciples who are upset and troubled and confused. Peter has been told: “You are going to deny me.” They have been told that one of their own will betray Jesus. They have been told these upsetting predictions about Jesus’ death. They don’t understand them and they are in turmoil. And Jesus points them to himself. In essence, his cure is simple: Trust in me. Trust in Jesus. Jesus is the cure for anxiety, impatience, fear. Faith remedies all of our inner turmoil.

When we looked at this passage, I described for you five ways. I won’t go into detail, but let me just list them out for you now.

- 1) Jesus speaks to us words of comfort. His words are reassuring and comforting.
- 2) He calls us to trust in him. He tells us not to worry, but to place our trust in him.
- 3) He gives us specific promises.
- 4) He reasons with us. There is a certain logic to faith. Jesus says, “Hey, would I tell you I’m going to prepare a place for you if I’m not going to prepare a place for you? I want you to think about this. I want you to place your trust in me. I’m reassuring you. I’m giving you the promise of eternal life and I want you to think about the implications of these things and to reason it out. Faith is not always blind, as we sometimes suppose. There is a common logic to spiritual things once we know God and know who he is and know that Jesus is the way to the Father.
- 5) He strengthens us with his very presence.

So, he speaks words of comfort. He calls us to trust. He gives us promises. He reasons with us. And he strengthens us with his very presence. Jesus is the way to cure a troubled heart.

II. Jesus is the way to heaven. He is the way to the eternal.

The specific promise given here is that there are many rooms in the Father's house. The image is used that Jesus is going to prepare a place for us and that there is room for us and that we will be home. We will be home with him. We will be home with the Father, and Jesus is the way to that which is eternal. We have the promise here of life forever with Jesus. So Jesus is the way to cure a troubled heart and he is the way to the eternal.

III. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (verses 5 and 6).

Thomas asks him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus responds, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The claim of exclusivity on the part of Jesus is contrary to modern sensibilities. We find it troubling. Understandably, we hear people who will say, "Well, isn't it arrogant to say that Christianity is correct and all other religions are incorrect? Everyone else is wrong?" Of course, what we miss when we say that is the idea that we are all making exclusive claims all the time.

Even yesterday, science had a march. Did you know that? There was a march in support of science. Evidently, science is having a hard time these days. Supposedly, in 500 cities people gathered to march. I think in reality it was a few cities, but Washington D.C. was one of the prominent locations. They were arguing for government policy to be based on scientific evidence. It's an exclusive claim. I'm not against the evidence of science. I would argue that science can only test the material. It can only test the natural. It can only test matter. It begins with the assumption that that is all there is. It has an innate, inherent inability to test anything outside of the natural or the material. So, it starts with the assumption that there is nothing else.

Jesus is making the claim here that that which is most real, that which is reality -- "prime reality" in the words of James Sire -- is God himself. So, when we begin to say, "Well, wait a minute -- that's an exclusive claim," we fail to understand that when we say, "All religions are true," that in and of itself is an exclusive claim. If we say, "I'm right and everyone who doesn't agree with me that all religions are true -- they are wrong," we are making an exclusive claim in that moment.

For example, you may have heard of the illustration of the elephant. There is this massive elephant and one group of people is holding onto the tail. They are describing the tail and that's one religion or one philosophy. Another group is holding onto the trunk, and another person the leg, and so forth -- another person the big floppy ears. They describe for you the reality that they perceive. The illustration is trying to communicate that everyone is right. Everyone is describing what they see, but they need everyone else.

Of course, the implication or the accusation is that if you believe that your little piece of the elephant is all that there is, how arrogant is that? But the real arrogance is found in the person who claims to see the elephant. Because when you give the illustration and you proclaim your version of the truth, you are saying, "Well you know what? Let me condescend to help all of you poor elephant holders to see that I alone see the entire perspective." What we find is that even if we say, for example, "doctrine isn't important," we have just proclaimed a doctrine. It's impossible for us to say anything of meaning without a degree of exclusivity.

I hope I haven't lost you in this little Philosophy 101 discourse. It's just to say that it's impossible to hold to real content of truth without doing so to some degree exclusively. All religions are making claims. "We are right. Others are wrong." Basically, all people, to some degree, are making those claims.

I'm not advocating for a minute that we fail to be respectful to others who disagree. We should be respectful. When I see little "Coexist" stickers and things on cars, I'm not sure how to interpret that. If that means, "Let's respect one another, let's have meaningful disagreements where we are allowed to hold to what we believe to be true and to respect others and to disagree and learn to get along, I'm like, "Yes! Amen!"

But if it means that we're all right, I'm like, "No! We're not all right!" Jesus makes a claim here to be the only way to God the Father. He is either right or wrong. In the words of C. S. Lewis, he is either lying and manipulating and evil, or crazy. In Lewis' words, "...on the level of someone who claims to be a poached egg..." or he is Lord of the universe.

So, the interpretation that would want to say, "Well, there are many ways to interpret this, and Jesus is a good teacher" -- Jesus doesn't give you that option to reduce him to just the level of a good teacher. He is making exclusive claims.

One more thought here that hopefully will serve you. There are intellectual assumptions underneath the objection against exclusivity. When we say one religion can't be right, that there are elements of truth in all and all are correct to some degree -- there are certain assumptions beneath that.

1. We are assuming that God is not personal.
2. We are assuming that God is not knowable.

So, the picture of God underneath those claims is that God is some sort of impersonal force, if he exists at all, and that we can't really know him. This passage is claiming that God is personal, that you can know him, that you can have a relationship with God, and that Jesus came as God to become a man so that you can know him. And that he does not give you, simply give you, eternal life or knowledge or truth. He is eternal life. He is truth. And that to receive those things, you receive something, someone more tremendous, more wonderful, more beautiful, more powerful - and that is Jesus himself. It's a radical message.

In some ways, it's so good that it rained today. You know, we track our attendance and find that it tends to decrease when it rains. It decreases when the weather is nice and people go to the beach. It decreases when it rains. You try to figure out the logic. We get an extra hour's sleep and it decreases. People go to the beach. We lose an hour, it decreases. I know, I sound like I'm whining, don't I? Although this is a good crowd for the rain, but maybe God brought you here to hear a really clear but important message that Jesus is the way.

A guest on Easter Sunday was commenting to one of our leaders how much they enjoyed the service and how refreshing they found the service to be so much about Jesus, on Easter, as if to say, "Wow, that's unique." I hope that's not the case. I have not visited any other churches in a long time. I'm usually here on Sunday morning. But I'm under the impression that at least in some places, Jesus is pushed to the margins. That's really unthinkable, isn't it, for us as Christians?

Jesus is the way! This is what it means to be Christ-centered. This is why our vision is to know and to grow in Jesus Christ. This is why, when we did our branding, we did something simple like a cross. We didn't put the church name on it. We didn't call attention, really, to the distinctives, as much as we wanted to say, "It's about Jesus Christ." I want to make this appeal to you as your pastor, as the leader of the pastoral team here, the leader of the elders. This is my commitment: We are about Christ. Whatever else is true of us as a church, whatever it might be, some of those

distinctives – they all are subservient to this glorious truth that Jesus is the way. He is sufficient. It's about him. Amen?

Listen to this quote from John Newton. “This includes all I can wish for my dear friends: that you may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus. To know him is the shortest description of true grace. To know him better is the surest mark of growth in grace. To know him perfectly is eternal life -- John 17:3.” He is saying that salvation is a gift. It's grace. And it is Jesus. Jesus is the gift. To know him is to receive God's grace. To grow in your knowledge of him is to grow in grace. And to know him perfectly is heaven, is eternal life, quoting John 17:3. “Christ is all and in all” -- Colossians 3:11. “Christ fills all in all” – Ephesians 1:23. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

When we say Jesus is the way, that's what's dominant amongst those three, but this much is clear. When we say Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, we are emphasizing that Jesus is everything. That was my exhortation on the Christ-centeredness of our lives and of the church.

Okay, moving on to #4.

IV. Jesus is the way to the Father, verses 7 through 11.

Powerful, powerful -- it feels almost a little bit like a rebuke that Jesus gives to Philip. He is saying, “Philip, have you been with me all this time and you don't understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? This is the very purpose for which I came – to make the Father known. Do you not understand that if you know me you know the Father? I'm here to bring you into relationship with me and with the Father and if you know me, you know the Father.” 1 Timothy 2:5: “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Jesus is the way. Jesus became a man so that we might know the Father. Listen to the words of Tony Reinke: “Only in Christ are the attributes of God rendered familiar to us in a human form as he relates to us as God as our Friend, Brother, and Husband, thereby positioning Christ as the supreme object of our deepest longings and affections.” He is saying to us there: God is infinite. When we begin to look at the attributes of God, we can't know God until we see those attributes in Jesus in his humanity. Then Jesus comes to us as a friend, as a brother, as a husband – these are all biblical images where Jesus personally relates to us in a powerful way, and the result is deep longings and affections come out of our hearts.

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I recently watched the movie Lion. I don't know if you've seen it. There are some troubling aspects to the movie in terms of what's portrayed. In it, a little boy gets separated from his family and is eventually adopted, then as an adult tries to reunite with them. There is a relationship between this little boy and his older brother. The older brother takes care of him. When I watched this movie, it touched me really deeply because I have a very special relationship with my older brother, who has been one of the constants in my life. I find it to be such a tremendous blessing to have siblings and to be part of family and to have children and to experience that gift from God.

I'm thankful for it, even in our brokenness and sin. That relationship for me has been very powerful. There have been times in my life -- I would say that my freshman year in college -- where God sustained me through my relationship with my brother. He was just there for me. God takes all of that emotion and says, "Jesus is your perfect brother. He is the brother caring for you and watching over you. He is the perfect husband, loving you and caring for you and providing for you."

Some of you have known disappointment in some of these family relationships and there is a longing in your heart for that which is whole and right. God is saying to you: "Jesus is that, and he is the object of the deepest longings of your soul, your affections."

I want to end with just a couple of thoughts on what you do with this. They are this: Meditate on Christ. Meditate on him. Christ is the point of connection for you to everything God has. It all comes to you in and through Jesus Christ. Just think for a moment on these quotes from John Owen: "I have had more advantage by thoughts of Christ than by anything in this world." That's an amazing statement, isn't it? The second quote: "And I think that when a soul has satisfying and exalting thoughts of Christ himself, his person and his glory, this is the way Christ dwells in our souls. If I've seen anything by my own experience it is this -- a person can measure his growth or his lack of growth by his thoughts and meditations on the person of Christ, his glory, the glory of his kingdom, and his love."

Ask yourself this right now: How much of this past week were your thoughts and meditations and affections given to Jesus, his glory, his kingdom, his love? Owen is saying that's the measure of our growth in Christ. It's powerful.

Listen to this last statement: "A heart that is inclined to converse with Christ in this way is a thriving heart. If this is strange or backwards to your heart, it is already under deadness and decay." Christ is the way.

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I'm going to ask our worship team to stay where they are. I'm going to ask you to bow your head and I'm going to lead us in a response right now in prayer before we close our service.

Lord, we began talking about a woman who lived to be 117 years of age, and the simplicity of her life. And Lord, as remarkable as it is to live 117 years, there is still something in me, and I believe in us, that would say that's just not enough if that's all there is. You are making a promise to us in this passage, Jesus, that you are the way to something so much more. Lord, would you reveal yourself to us as the way, the truth, and the life? I pray, Lord, that if there is anyone here today who doesn't know you, that they would come to know you as their savior - not just for the promise of living forever, but for the promise of knowing you and knowing the Father. Lord, fill us with the reality of who you are. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

God bless you. This concludes our service. Have a wonderful Lord's Day.