

Seven Sayings of Jesus: I Am...The Way, the Truth, and the Life

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, June 18th. Today is, and I was talking to somebody yesterday who realized it was Father's Day Eve, and she panicked.

She said, oh dear, how did I miss this? So I want to take a moment to recognize dads this morning. And so first of all, if you are a male, this is where, remember, Mother's Day, I told you, it's not your turn yet.

Well, today's your turn. So there's a tray, a beautiful tray, Mark brought, of chocolate bars. So if you are a gentleman, please, and even if you're not a gentleman, please feel free to have a chocolate bar.

So I want to recognize dads a bit this morning. If you're like me, maybe you didn't get breakfast in bed. I did not. I don't like eating in bed, it's yucky. So anyway, maybe you didn't get a bouquet, or maybe you did.

Maybe you got a box of chocolates, or not, or a handmade card. I'm beyond the stage and age of my children where I get ties, thankfully, because I'm not too much of a tie guy anymore.

[1 : 05] But maybe you got some of these things, or all of them, and you should consider yourself to be lucky, I think. So let's be honest. Moms have the truly challenging and largely painful job, literally, of bringing children into the world.

But dads play an important role, too. And it's important that we recognize it. Dads share the responsibility. Share the responsibility of raising children and modeling good moral values. Modeling personal character and integrity. Dads may even take on the role of providing more of the household income to allow moms to raise the children.

That's what we did in our lives. As we watch friends drive Lexuses and other things, we thought, we'll pay for braces and allow Michelle to stay home.

So it's all about perspective. Or so if parents both work, dads hopefully, hopefully, share the work around the house. Share that load as well.

[2 : 10] So speaking from experience, now, many of you know that Connor is going away to school this fall. And I actually teared up this morning when I was thinking about it because I thought, he's one of my best friends.

My son is one of my best friends and he's going to be gone. So being a father has been, continues to be, one of the greatest adventures, one of the greatest challenges and joys of my life.

Particularly now, because we are watching them grow. We are watching them become adults with responsibilities and challenges. Michelle and I are spending more time biting our tongues than we thought we ever might.

But I remember my dad doing the same thing for me. My dad said, when I was about 16, in there somewhere, he said, I'm making a change. And I said, well, good for you.

You know, move out and do your own thing. No. And he said, I'm now your mentor. And I said, okay, I feel like you always have been.

[3 : 14] And he said, well, he said, I'm moving from being just your dad to your mentor. He said, I'm here to guide you. I'm here to help you and encourage you and give you advice and ideally not judge your choices.

So being a father has given me a really great appreciation for my own father, as I'm saying there. He was one of the greatest mentors, still is.

His legacy continues in my life. One of the greatest mentors and friends I have ever had. And I miss him a great deal. But even though he's gone now, the legacy that he created for me, the wisdom he

passed along, the many ways that he shaped and molded and influenced my life, live on. And maybe that's your experience as well. Maybe, no matter where you are in the journey of fatherhood, maybe your experience has been a positive one. And so I'll note now that obviously people listen to the sermons later in the week or through our podcast or other things.

So I'm partly speaking to those folks as well. So perhaps your own experience with your father has been positive, that you've learned from him, that he shaped your character in positive ways and you've been able to pass some of that along to your own children.

[4 : 36] Maybe even to your grandchildren as well. But this morning, and I reflected on this around Mother's Day as well, we recognize that being a father can be hard.

As a father, I have made bad decisions. I have said things that I regret. And sadly, in our world, we recognize broken families.

Divorce, failed relationships are more common than we would like them to be. We recognize that men can become fathers in less than ideal circumstances without having received healthy models or healthy examples of their own.

And for others, like me, we deeply miss our fathers. We long for one last conversation, one last, if I had one last opportunity for a consultation about X, I would definitely take it.

For some men, they may reflect on the father that they never really knew. A father who is really never there for them. Or in fact, maybe they're even glad, I have friends who are glad that their father is gone.

[5 : 53] So this morning, we recognize that Father's Day can be a time of celebration for some, but a time of grief or longing for others, even anger or frustration.

We recognize that Father's Day can also be a challenge for women as well. because if they find themselves missing their own father, the father of their children, or any other challenging emotions that are associated with this day, that can be hard.

So regardless of your circumstances, may it be a time of joy and a time of reflection. May God bring peace and comfort and healing to you if that's what you need in your circumstances.

And in all these things, we can celebrate that we have a good God, our Heavenly Father, who is the greatest God, the greatest Father of all.

And He loves you just as you are. And that's not even the sermon. Happy Father's Day. So we're continuing in our sermon series called The Seven Sayings of Jesus I Am.

[7 : 00] And if you're counting, this is number six. So in this series, we've been considering Jesus' identity. What He said about Himself and then how we can better understand our identity in light of that context and that truth.

So Jesus, we can recognize from Scripture, especially the New Testament, He says a great deal about Himself. His identity, about His mission throughout the New Testament.

And as I've said each week, we can also recognize that in the Old Testament, the prophets were speaking of Jesus when they prophesied the coming Messiah. But in this series, we've been specifically looking at the I Am statements of Jesus, Himself reflecting on His own identity in the Gospel of John.

So this morning, John 13, verse 31, to chapter 14, verse 7, is our focus. So we're going to look at this together. So this is a big chunk, not as big as it may seem.

So grab a Bible from the pew in front of you or turn your Bible app on or you can just listen as I read. When He was gone, now this is speaking about Judas, Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him.

[8 : 24] If God is glorified in Him, God will glorify the Son in Himself and will glorify Him at once. This is Jesus speaking now.

My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for Me and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now, where I'm going, you cannot come.

A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.

Simon Peter asked Him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied, where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down My life for you. Then Jesus answered, will you really lay down Your life for Me?

[9 : 26] Very truly, I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times. And we know how that plays out. Jesus says, Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Trust in God, trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. 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 may also be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.

Thomas said to Him, Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really know Me, you will know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him.

[10 : 32] I don't know about you, but uncertainty about the future tends to make me anxious. I think I've shared with you before, Michelle sometimes refers to me as need-to-know guy.

I like to know the details. I like to know the context, the timing. Except on vacation, then I don't care. But I need to know the timing of things or I start to get a little worked up.

I remember feeling anxious about moving from elementary school to junior high. Yikes. From junior high to high school. From high school to university. I remember the unknown of those things.

I remember being a bit anxious before I got married. I still have marriage anxiety even today. I remember being a bit anxious when we were expecting our first child.

Not so much our second, but the first one. I had a friend ask me once, you're a dad, you have two children in your family, what advice would you give me?

[11 : 36] And I said, okay, read everything you can, get every book you can on child raising children, on how to discipline, how to teach them, how to, and I said, read them all and throw them directly into the garbage.

And he went, what? And I said, because you won't know. I said, you can think you're as prepared as you possibly can be, but I said, that's the adventure you're about to embark on.

So perhaps the worst feeling of an uncertain future, and I'm sure you've all been here, is preparing for the death of a much-loved family member.

Maybe a parent, a partner. People tend to wonder how they will be able to go on, how they will be able to face this and face the future without this person.

And uncertainty or fear of the unknown are very much a part of being human, and we all recognize that. It's part of who we are, and it's part of how we've been made.

[12 : 42] So how do we take what we've just read from Scripture, what Jesus says about who he is in that passage, and marry it with our understanding within our own circumstances, our limited perspective?

Well, we've read John 14, verse 6 this morning, and it's often quoted by people as an evangelistic tool of sorts to suggest that Jesus is the only way to God.

It's true. That is absolutely true. that Jesus is different, clearly different, from all other religious leaders ever. That's true.

I think we'd all agree. And in fact, all of Jesus' I am sayings do that. They set him apart as being different from any other religious figure ever.

So Jesus definitely claims to be revealing God in a way that no other person ever has. but he's not simply saying, recognize this, he's not simply saying, this is how I think you will find God.

[13 : 54] He's actually boldly declaring that if you believe in me, if you follow me, then you are believing in God and following God.

That's what he's stating in that I am phrase. He's saying that if you follow me, you are on the right path. So when we look at the context of those words within the context of the entire book of John, which we should, we don't want to cherry pick out of scripture, we find, though, that Jesus is not really addressing the issue of you recognizing him and following him at all in this context.

So people tend to pull that little passage, that little section out and use it in different ways. we need to recognize that in this context, Jesus is speaking directly and specifically to his disciples, to his very anxious disciples who he's telling them, I'm leaving you.

We recognize that in the passage. He's speaking to a group of men who desperately want assurance, they desperately want hope in this great time of uncertainty that they're about to face.

This I am saying of Jesus is found in John's account of the last few hours Jesus has with his disciples, just before his arrest and his trial and his crucifixion.

[15:26] So if we put it in that context, these men know what is to come to some extent. So the account of this gathering begins at John 13 verse 1 where John says, Jesus knew the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

This opening context about Jesus leaving sets the stage. It gives us some idea about what comes next. And then Jesus says to his disciples, my children, I will be with you only a little while longer. where I am going, you cannot come. We heard this a moment ago. So in other words, Jesus is saying to his disciples, I'm about to leave you.

And that's in a sense that Jesus doesn't mean he's going on a short trip. I'm not going up the road to Capernaum and I'll be back in a week. Jesus is saying, leaving, leaving.

So Peter asked then, as we read, Lord, where are you going? To this question, Jesus replies, where I'm going, you cannot follow me, but you will follow later.

[16:43] Imagine Peter's reaction to that. What are you talking about? I want to come now. And at this point, the disciples would have been confused, right?

They would have been becoming likely more and more anxious. If you're leaving, can I not just go, I'll carry your stuff, I'll come with you. And beginning at John 14 verse 1, we see that Jesus begins by encouraging and bringing comfort.

He encourages the disciples and tries to comfort them by saying, don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't worry. Because he's saying he's leaving to prepare a place for them to come and be with him, where he will be, where he is going.

But even more than that, he says, I will come back and get you. Jesus tells them not to worry because they know where he's going.

And as I often say when I talk about interactions between Jesus and the disciples, or Jesus and a crowd, Jesus will give a metaphor, give an example, give an illustration, and people don't get it.

[17:56] And I think that's what happens here as well. Jesus tells them not to worry because they know where he's going. They've been with him three years, but we can still feel that dread and that uncertainty in Thomas' words, right?

A future without Jesus with them in a physical way is scary, especially in a situation where they know as Jesus' followers, if he goes, they're in great, great danger.

So none of the disciples would have liked this idea, right? Not only for their teacher and their Lord to go, but for them not to be able to go with him. So it's in that context to this very anxious group of disciples that Jesus says this phrase, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And as I shared with you last week, it's even more powerful because the translation from Greek into English tends to add the in to the Jesus I am statements.

So as I said last week, I am resurrection. That's what Jesus is saying. I am life. He's not saying I'm a kind of resurrection.

[19:13] I'm a kind of life, which is what the being added in tends to soften the language. Jesus is saying I am way. I am truth.

I am life. Period. These words in context are not spoken to condemn other people.

They're not spoken to condemn people who are not followers of Jesus. And yet we hear these words used in that way. They're spoken to assure and bring comfort to people who are followers of Jesus, both then and now.

They direct our attention to Jesus who reveals God, who speaks as God, to Jesus who will never abandon or forsake us, and to Jesus who sustains us on life's journey, and at the end will come to take us home.

Jesus says, no one comes to the Father but by me. First, we recognize that Jesus is speaking the most boldly and directly about himself here, almost more than any of the other I am sayings.

[20:39] Jesus is saying, I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am. If we want to find the way to God, God, if we want to know the truth about God, if we want eternal life, then we find these things only in Jesus.

Unlike all other religious leaders who pointed away from themselves by giving teaching on how their followers might find a way to God, Jesus says, I am that way.

I am the only way. He says, follow me. Believe in me. Jesus wasn't suggesting he was some kind of God, but rather he was the one true God.

And that by believing in him, by following him, by worshiping Jesus, we are following, believing, and worshiping the one God who is perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ.

Second, we need to recognize that Jesus says, I am the way. He doesn't say, I'll show you the way, or I'll point you in the right direction and figure it out from there on your own.

[22 : 00] You ever had someone try and explain to you, this is pre-GPS, ever explain to you how to get somewhere? That can be pretty stressful, can't it? So you know the A&W; on that street that used to be there?

Do you vaguely remember where that is? Okay, when you get there, you've gone too far, head back south two and a half blocks, turn by where that big old tree used to be, do you remember there? Take two lefts or right, then head south for three miles, and you'll get there.

It's pretty easy, actually, I do it all the time. Yikes. Have you had those directions? I've been given those directions. I don't know about you, but when I have no idea where I'm going, it's a huge relief when someone says, oh, just follow me.

I know I won't be confused, right? I know I won't be uncertain. Did I miss the turn? No, I'm following someone who knows the way. Jesus doesn't say, I'll show you the way to get where you're going, I'll give you directions.

He says, I am the way. Follow me and I will be with you every step of the way. Third, we also recognize that Jesus says, I am the truth.

[23 : 18] Not I am one possible truth among many truths, right? He is the truth. In a world where truth can be defined in just about any way you want to do it, depending on who you ask, what their experience is, in a world where truth can be subjective or even relative at times, in a world where we've become skeptical about the very idea of what is true, what isn't true.

It's comforting, it should be comforting to us that Jesus is truth. His words for us are true. His motives and his intentions for us are true.

Black and white truth. Fourth, we note that Jesus says, I am the life. You're familiar with the Christian message in lots of churches nowadays that says, church is about enriching your life, making it feel better, making you feel better about how you're doing.

Church needs to be about making your life better. Not your circumstances, not your perspective. Believing and following Jesus can and should make your life more full.

But Jesus means that a life following him will be better than any other option. The life. He was saying, I am life.

[24 : 54] I have given you life. I will give you eternal life. The flow of life passes through Jesus alone.

Jesus will transform our lives. He's promised that. And he will give us a life that even death cannot, will not destroy.

Thomas Akempis. Maybe you know him, maybe you don't. He was a devout and holy monk who lived in the 15th century. He wrote a book called The Imitation of Christ.

And I'm going to read a little bit from that book. In that book, he presents a short dialogue between Jesus and anyone who would choose to follow him. So think of these words as being from Jesus spoken to you.

My child, the more you depart from yourself, the more you will be able to enter into me. As the giving up of exterior things brings interior peace, so the forsaking of yourself unites you to me.

[26 : 02] I will have you learn perfect surrender to my will without contradiction or complaint. Follow me. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Without the way, there is no going. Without the truth, there is no knowing. Without the life, there is no living.

I am the way which you must follow, the truth which you must believe, the life for which you must hope.

I am the way that is straight, the supreme truth, the life that is true, the life that is blessed, the life that is spiritual.

If you abide in my way, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, and you shall attain life everlasting. One thing we can likely all recognize as human beings, life can be uncertain, can't it?

[27 : 11] The road can be difficult at times. But when we face an uncertain future, Jesus said to us, he says to us even now, do not let your hearts be troubled.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. I've got this, and I've got you. My friends, follow Jesus.

He is the way. Trust him. He is your ultimate source of truth. Surrender to him. Live an abundant life, both now and into eternity, in him.
Amen.