

I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life

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[0 : 0 0] The internet is full of sat-nav jokes. I'll like to this one. A minicab driver taking a fare to a Chelsea football match ended up 146 miles off course after his sat-nav directed him to the small village of Stamford Bridge in North Yorkshire instead of the Chelsea football ground in London.

There was the man who was stopped by armed anti-terrorist police at Manchester Airport. Apparently he'd been observed circling the airport for about an hour and when they stopped and challenged him he said that his sat-nav was directing him to a Burger King.

Sadly it didn't tell him that it wasn't a Burger King drive-thru and in fact the Burger King that he was looking for was 100 metres inside the Manchester Terminal building.

In this I Am series of teachings of Jesus the disciples are at a crunch point because they are looking for direction.

Jesus knows that the cross is looming. He knows that it isn't far away. He's washed his disciples feet. He predicts his betrayal. He's sharing with them at the Last Supper. Peter has made that huge statement to say that he will lay down his life for Jesus and Jesus tells him the sobering fact that he will deny him three times.

[1 : 2 1] It sounds like the disciples are totally lost as to what is happening. They are certainly in need of direction. Does that sound familiar to you in your life?

Has there been times when you have desperately needed direction and not really sure where to look? That's where the disciples are this morning. The good news is that Jesus steps straight in.

He doesn't hold back. He reassures them in the reading that we have just heard this morning. And you may recognise this reading. It's the reading that we read so often at people's funerals. And for people I believe it's a huge hope and encouragement.

Because if the person who has died hasn't really followed Jesus' direction for most of their life, everyone is sitting there hoping beyond hope and in the grace of God that their loved one is going in the right direction.

Because it's the big question, isn't it? How do we know the way? Thomas gets to ask that big question in scripture. I guess everybody else in the room was wanting to ask that one.

[2 : 3 6] But it's Thomas who asks it. You know, if we don't know where you're going, how can we follow you? Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. Don't worry. Don't worry, I'll show you. If you stick with me, you won't get lost. The promise is still true for us today.

I love that rabbinic saying that may you be covered by the dust of your rabbi. People would stay so close to their rabbi. And if you stick close to Jesus, we can't go wrong.

Let's dig into the story this morning from John 14. We begin with the fact of the way of Jesus. It's a way of life. Jesus showed them and us what it looks like in the everyday to be a disciple, to do life with Jesus.

In this reading, Jesus was preparing his disciples for the grief that they will inevitably feel at his coming death. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Jesus tells them, trust in God and trust in me.

[3 : 50] Because in my Father's house, there are many rooms. I'm going to go and prepare a place for you and will come back and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am.

You know, that's hugely comforting. That's hugely comforting for the future. That's my reservations, I guess, about a sat-nav.

You know, I don't really trust in the route it's going to take me. As much as I want to go in one direction, often it takes me off down a country lane, somewhere where I don't really want to go.

And I don't totally trust it. You know, with Jesus, we have eternal life in him. We can rise above the worry and fear. We know that when life takes a bit of a detour, that Jesus is with us and will put us back on the right track.

I'm so thankful for that in my life, and I'm sure you are for yours as well at times. Jesus takes our hand and lead us. And no matter how diminished our physical frame becomes, we have that peace of knowing that there is life beyond the grave too.

[5 : 03] What a comfort. But this isn't about just eternal life. This is about now. You know, while it's common and correct interpretations to think that Jesus was talking about the way to heavenly life, Jesus is also talking about the way of life that starts now when we say yes to Jesus.

You know, in this Gospel of John, eternal life is a quality of existence as much as a period of time. A quality of life begins as soon as we believe and say yes and continue in our discipleship with Jesus.

Like many people, there are people stepping out with new ventures at the moment. They're stepping into uncharted territory in their life and in their career.

A friend of mine sent me this. He said, when you think you have arrived, the journey is probably only just beginning. That is so true. But Jesus is with you. Jesus' directions mean that we have the confidence to face whatever we are facing.

We don't have to run and hide. We don't have to detour around in fear. We can go forward believing that Jesus is always with us as he has promised.

[6 : 18] But then Jesus talks about truth. Truth is an interesting concept, isn't it? You know, by saying I am the way, the truth and the life, Jesus was referring to the truth in his relationship with the Father.

Many of Jesus' first century peers thought that he overstated his relationship with the Father. And I would dare say there's many people that would do that today. All that I am talk is pretty hard to absorb.

You know, and people will say, and I've heard it again and again in Alpha courses, you know, how can one human being be God in the world? How could one limited flesh and blood person represent all that God is?

How could someone who lived for only 33 years be the God who was and is and always will be? It's big questions. Even harder, perhaps, is the statement in John 14, 6, no one comes to the Father except through me.

You know, those big statements. But you know what? I think sometimes we make this harder than it is. The truth is that Jesus was and is in such a close relationship with the Father that he gives us, us, his followers, an opening to the Father himself.

[7 : 38] That was it. The power and values of the Father are revealed in and through the ministries of Jesus again and again and again. And that's what all these I am sayings are about.

They were glimpses of the Father. You know, hence Jesus can say with confidence, I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life.

Through Jesus, we know the Father. We have seen the Father through the character and love of Jesus. We have seen people loved.

We have seen people held. We have seen people saved. We have seen people rescued. That's the truth that Jesus was trying to tell Thomas. The Father isn't distant and unknowable.

They are already living in a relationship because of Jesus. They were already living in the way of truth. I find huge strength in John 14, 6, in this I am statement that he makes.

[8 : 43] Yet in this peace world, many of maybe our peers, Christians, not yet Christians, struggle with the term, no one comes to the Father but by me.

Let's just put this in the context of Jesus' teaching and his character. Jesus wasn't arrogant. Jesus didn't set high bars for people to fail.

Jesus never claimed superiority over others. His humility was evident in all that he did. In fact, when he says this, he is facing the cross, excruciating death and pain to save you and I.

I don't sense that he is condemning anyone here. He's offering a way. A way of truth and life. A way of salvation.

Jesus is the way of life. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And love your neighbour as yourself. No one gets excluded from those choices.

[9 : 52] That's just an offer that is being made. The love of God in Christ Jesus. For each one of us to take if we wish. And it's a good path to take.

So how is your life configured at the moment? Have you put in the right data? Do you trust him? Do you totally trust him? In his directions for your life?

Have you checked in lately to see if you're on the right road? And if you haven't, are you ready to seek a new direction with him? Are you confident enough in your own life in Jesus to direct other people to him?

Are you confident in your own journey with him? When you find yourself and others up a cul-de-sac of life, not knowing where to go, having taken the wrong turn.

Are you ready to repent? Repent means just turning around. Are you ready to reconfigure and repent and journey with Jesus in a new direction?

[10 : 53] Are you humble and bold and courageous enough to do that? And are you ready to submit to God's will and his leading? Because when the rubber hits the road, can I be confident enough to let go of the steering wheel, knowing that God will guide me?

Submitting to God's will takes humility. Stopping to ask him what that journey should look like is a big thing for some of us.

Maybe today you want to do that. Maybe you want to go back to the map, to the Bible. Maybe you haven't opened it for days, weeks, maybe even years.

Maybe you just want to go back and reconfigure with who this Jesus is that we are following. And believing in those big statements that he makes. Thomas said along with many today.

We don't know where we're going. How can we know the way? And Jesus says to him and to us. I am the way, the truth and the life.

[12 : 06] It's a great setting for our lives.