

Jesus the Way (Communion Service)

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Date: 05 November 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Will you turn with me back to John's Gospel, chapter 14. In the passage we read, particularly I'd like to focus on the first few verses of that chapter, maybe down to verse 6, and the words of comfort in many ways and encouragement that Jesus gives to the disciples and look for the Spirit of God to apply that in our own lives and circumstances, particularly as we focus on what the Lord has done in his great death and resurrection.

And it's a really great theme. It's a great theme. It's a theme of home that Jesus is speaking of here. And it's something that every single one of us can associate with and understand and appreciate when we think of home.

It's a great thing, isn't it, at the end of a day, generally speaking, to go home. Home, we say, is where the heart is. And home is hugely significant to us in our lives for good and sometimes for ill also.

But we know, generally speaking, in our lives that home's that place where we feel the most relaxed. It's where we feel safe, we close the doors, and we're at home.

And we're at home surrounded by people who love us, where we're known and where we seek and hope for peace. But it's interesting, too, that longing.

[1 : 3 7] It's a deep-seated longing in our very beings for home, however that is expressed. But it's also, interestingly, paradoxically in many ways, the object of Satan's focus also.

And in the place where we long for and hope for the greatest peace and security and belonging can also paradoxically be the place of violence for many people.

A place of fear, a place of isolation, where there should be fellowship, a place of destruction. We see it in our television screens all the time on the news reports where, in somewhere like Syria, people are driven from their homes.

The one place that they have because of war and brutality and violence. And they've lost everything. They carry with them all that they have. And it's often also, not so much paradoxically, but sadly, the place where we experience most illness.

Or where that illness is outworked. And even where we spend our last days and die. But there's an ultimate reality in the concept of home.

[3 : 0 3] And that is our belonging, our belonging as people to the living God and to relationship with him. And what sin has done in an ultimate sense is separated us from our heavenly Father and from our heavenly home and from eternal life and belonging for which we were created in the first place.

Every single one of us were separated, ultimately, from life and from that fellowship with him. And in a shadowy sense, that is, in many ways, what the disciples were experiencing here in the upper room.

It was a really dark experience for them. You know, earlier on, they'd spoken to Jesus. Jesus, we've left everything for you. We've left families and homes and jobs. We've nowhere because we have come to follow you.

And here they're in this place of great darkness and great foreboding and palpable opposition, both from outside, physically, from those who sought Jesus' life and their lives, but also from spiritual darkness and the forces of evil.

And they're confused. And they don't know what's happening. And they're asking questions of the Messiah. Is he leaving us? Why is he coming here? Why is he going to Jerusalem towards his death, towards those who oppose him?

[4 : 40] They've had the Last Supper where Jesus has spoken of someone who will betray them. Judas has walked out. The rest of them have been prophetically spoken of by Jesus as denying that they will all deny him.

And there's this huge sense of confusion and spiritual and real darkness in their lives, deep-seated pain and trouble.

Now our lives may not have the same crisis as these disciples, but we do know that our lives, to a greater or lesser degree, are invaded by trouble.

And our homes are never the places of perfection and hope that sometimes we desire them to be. We know physical difficulties and illness and battles, spiritual struggles.

And we may even look at Jesus Christ and think, he's not living up to my expectations of what it was to be a believer, what it is to be a believer. As the disciples were misunderstood Christ, so often we misunderstand Jesus Christ as well.

[5 : 53] Maybe we feel we have let him down rather than him letting us down. We may have all kinds of brokenness, broken hopes, broken hearts, or broken dreams.

What is it then for us today that Christ has to offer? What does Christ say to his disciples? And what does then he say to us? It's his living word.

We're worshipping on the resurrection morning. This is not a dry, flat, dead history, historical account merely. It is much more. It's the living word of God through which he communicates with us into our lives.

And so we spend a few moments looking at the outstanding claims of Jesus Christ that we have here in this passage. Because in many ways, everything that we believe about Jesus Christ stands or falls in the upper room.

The upper room is an astonishing place. And he says some amazing things. He gives some incredible insights into who he is and into why he has come and into his purpose and will for his people.

[7 : 00] His prayers are surpassing excellence for us in John 17. But let's go there.

Let's go into the upper room for a few moments this morning. And recognize the word of Jesus Christ to us. He's about to face crucifixion. We have no concept of what he was facing in his own soul and mind at this point.

The three hours of unimaginable darkness were within touching distance for him. That darkness where he would sense uniquely as never before the separation from his father that is mysterious and unspoken in many ways as he paid the price for our sins.

Yet we find him pastoring, speaking to, comforting, and revealing himself here to his disciples. And he says to them, let not your hearts be troubled.

You see, he knows their hearts. He knows their hearts are troubled. And he knows your heart today. And he knows my heart. He knows all of our hearts today. And he speaks into our lives and into our spiritual condition and says, don't let your hearts be troubled.

[8 : 15] I know what is happening. This does seem like darkness and homelessness and emptiness and the end for you. But he says, that is not the case. This is not the end of the story.

And it's very similar in many ways what we were looking at previously on one of our other evenings when we recognized and could see that the victory is already won.

This is the commander of the Lord's army. Jesus Christ, just as he spoke words of victory at Jericho before the destruction, so he speaks here and he speaks words of victory to the people, to his own disciples.

He is going to be the burden bearer. And this is great, as it were, spiritual fighting talk from Jesus to them. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in me. Believe in God. Believe also in me. And what he's saying there is, put your trust in me. Entrust yourself to me.

[9 : 22] You may not know what's happening, but trust what is about to be unfolded and continue to put your trust in me.

Now, we can kind of brush over that statement and think, yeah, that's a simple statement from Jesus. He says, believe in God. Believe also in me. He was speaking this to dyed-in-the-wool Old Testament monotheistic Jews.

Jews who believed there was only one God. Who recited the Shema every morning and every evening as an introduction to their prayers.

Hear, O Lord God. You are the living God. You are one. This was this great Old Testament monotheistic religion that believed in the one God.

And here he's saying to these people, believe in God. Believe also in me. He is making a huge claim to divinity. To saying that he is equal with God and that he is to be trusted and relied on as God.

[10 : 31] He is claiming the right to their faith as he is to yours and to mine today. Because of who he is. He's no weak puppet. He is the living God.

And his crucifixion is the greatest event in history. And the most counterintuitive of all time. He's saying to them, things are not as they seem. I am God.

And he goes on to use that phrase, I am, several times as he describes himself. And you can't help but think of his revelation of himself elsewhere where he says, before Abraham was born, I am.

Where he claims that, again, that great Old Testament name of the saving, redeeming God, Yahweh, Jehovah. And takes it to himself.

I am. And so he's claiming great authority and great divinity. And he claims that they follow him.

[11 : 28] And that they listen to what he's saying. And he says, I am he. And he goes on to explain what he has come to do. And he says, I'm preparing your home.

In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. I would have told you that. I go to prepare a place for you. And so he's explaining what is about to happen.

This is just before the crucifixion, as you well know. And he's saying he's going ahead to prepare for them their home. Their home with the father.

And all that we enjoy as home. All that we value as home. All that we look forward to. Or even dream of that we maybe never had as home.

We find is only a shadow of what is actually ours in Jesus Christ. That we belong to the father. In other words, it's a relational thing.

[12 : 29] Not just a physical reality. But a relational thing. We belong to the father. The father is the head of the home. And we are his children. As we come to him through Jesus Christ.

And he is preparing a divine residence for us. And we will feast in the house of Zion with him.

Of which this is only a shadow. A place of limitless security. A city of gold. A garden. A place of unbridled love.

A place where the tears have been wiped away. A place of belonging. And of security. And of worship. That is not only spiritual.

It's not only... Sometimes we think of it as ethereal. There's something in the heavens and the sky. But ultimately we'll be... We'll subsume this universe as it is renewed by God.

[13 : 34] In the new heavens and the new earth. That place where we will be with him forever. And that is what he is reminding them of. There's a bigger picture. I'm building my kingdom.

And this is the entry into the kingdom. And this is what I'm preparing for my people. I'm preparing a home. I'm going to use a word that I don't really like.

It's a word that I never used to hear. But it's become very popular in marketing and advertising. Where it's bespoke. Have you heard that word bespoke? I never used to hear that word.

But all of a sudden it's popular and everything. You get bespoke everything. I didn't even know what it meant. Until I looked it up. And it just means specially made. Made especially.

Individually. And to use that. He's saying. I'm making a personal home. It is a bespoke home. He says. I'm in my father's house. I'm making this.

[14 : 30] I prepare a place for you. He says. So this ultimate. This sacrificial reality. Is that what he is doing. And what he has done.

And what we remember today. Is for us. He's preparing a home. For us. You know sometimes. Occasionally. Mid afternoon. Well late afternoon.

Before tea. Come in. And the children have got the television on. It is extreme makeover. US style or something. And. So a program that's guaranteed.

To make you cry. Because. They're. They're changing someone's home. Someone who's living in poor circumstances. Maybe. A mother and father. Looking after a disabled child.

And they don't have the right. Home. Or the right. Equipment. Or anything. And they're too poor to change. And this team comes in. And absolutely transforms the home. And it makes it a bespoke home.

[15 : 25] The decoration. And all the equipment. And the luxury. That they provide. Is specially made. And everything is guaranteed. For an emotional response.

And. And. And what. God is providing for us. In Christ. Is. Exactly. What we were made for.

Exactly. What we were made for. We were made for. A relationship with God. For God is our father. From which sin has estranged us. And we were made for us. And we were made to be in fellowship.

With him. And in his company. That is. The glory of what he has done for us. Eh. He is making this home.

Which is. Absolutely right for us. As individuals. Absolutely right for us. As we were created in his image. To be in relationship with him. In his company.

[16 : 21] Eh. In the place that he has made. And it's going to be a wonderful place. And when I was younger. I used to think.

Well heaven sounds very boring. Clouds and harps. And things like that. Going on forever. That's. That's not what we get from scripture. It is an absolute.

An absolute place. That fulfills. Every single. Eh. Atom of our being. As we were created to be. As it's. As our sin. And our separation from him.

As we have been. As we have been. As we have been. As we have been. As we recognize who he is. So I am preparing a home. And it's a home. Especially. For us. And he is making. The way there.

He is opening the way. For us. To get. To our home. Eh. I go. And prepare. A place. For you. That is what he is doing.

[17 : 16] He is making the way. He is confidently speaking. Of victory. And of purpose. And of sovereign plan. That he is coming.

To fulfill. He is on the threshold. Of his death. Is on the threshold. Of his crucifixion. And he is saying. I am here. Deliberately. I am here.

For a purpose. I am here. With my father's blessing. I am here. Because I love you. And I am here. Because I will defeat. The powers of darkness. And death. And sin.

And the grave. Because you know. Our home is blocked. Our way home. Is blocked. There is no entry. To our home. I have seen to the elders. Before we came in briefly today.

That in St. Columbus today. It is a difficult day. For them to get to church. Because we are right in the city centre. And they have blocked off. All the roads. We can't get a car near the church.

[18 : 11] Because there is a 10k race. That happens every few months. In the city. We are blocked off. There is no way. That people can easily. Get to church today. And it is a frustration.

But there is a much more serious blockage. To our home coming. And to our relationship with God. That affects every single one of us. And it is the sin.

That caused us to be. Separated. From the living God. And leaves us. Spiritually. And eternally. Homeless.

In darkness. Away from the light. Not only physically dying. But spiritually. Dead. And therefore. He speaks here. Of opening the way.

And it is the way of the cross. That is the way. That he opens up. The road to the cross. And the cross itself. His death and resurrection. Is the driveway.

[19 : 11] Towards our eternal home. It is the only access that there is. God the son. God who says. He is equal with the father. God who reveals himself here.

In the person of his son. So powerfully. Is to be nailed to a tree. Is to be rejected. And to be despised. And satanically opposed.

He is to face. He is to face. All the forces. Of darkness. As well as the wrath. Of his father. As he bears. Our sin. As he takes the weight.

Of being the sin bearer. Not for his own. But for our sins. He senses. Maybe one way of describing the forsakenness.

And I wouldn't presume to do that. Is. That Jesus sensed a homelessness there. A separation from his father. With whom he had been in eternal fellowship.

[20 : 09] As he bears our grief. And our sorrows. And our sins. Sensing the father's displeasure. And. Paying the price.

For our sins. On the cross. He cries. It's finished. It's done. We can't add to it. Can't take away from it. It is there.

It is done. The way has been opened. And isn't that a great. Visual. A great practical. Outworking of that. That God gives.

To the people then. And to us. When the curtain of the temple. This great. 70 foot high. Double thickness. Curtain. Which separated. The holy of holies.

Where God's presence was. From the rest of the world. And from the people. From the rest of the temple. And the rest of the world. Is ripped in two. From top to bottom. Miraculously.

[21 : 05] As an evidence. That the way has been opened. The way has been opened. To free access. Back home. What does Jesus.

What illustration. Does Jesus use. Of our salvation. Prodigal son. Who leaves home. And who comes to his senses.

When he realizes. What am I doing. What am I doing. I'm made in God's image. And I want to eat. The food. The pigs. Are eating. I will rise.

And go back to my father. The father. Lifts up. His robes. In a most undignified way. To run.

In love. And in desire. To receive. His prodigal child home. And. That is. One of God's. Great pictures. Of.

[22 : 01] Our. Redemption. That he has opened the way. Through the cross. And that he will return. To take us. To.

Himself. And that's a great reality. For us to consider today. I will. He says. Come back for you. It's a reminder to us again. That the. The Lord's Supper.

Is an. Anticipatory feast. It isn't an end. In itself. But it enables us. Not just to look back. And remember. What Jesus has done. It is not simply.

And we mustn't think of it. Simply as remembering. A dead figure. In the past. This is the resurrected. Redeemer. The savior. The living God.

Who says. Do this. Until I come back. It's. It's an. Inter. Inter. Period. That we are to celebrate. This Lord's Supper.

[22 : 56] Until. He comes. Back for us. You know. That is the theme. Isn't it. Of. A thousand love stories. Of the lover. Who. Who will come back. For the one.

That he. Or she loves. And today. We are reminded. That he is not. He is never forgotten us. We might not understand. What. Experiences. We're going through.

We might not understand. The darkness. Of our personal. Experiences. We might question. Much of what. God is doing. But you can never say. God. You don't care.

And you're disinterested. In my needs. And in my. Circumstances. Because he is coming back. And he knows. All that we are going through.

And simply asks. That we commit. What we are going through. To him. As our living God. Reminding us. As he did. To the people. His disciples.

[23 : 50] Do not let. Your hearts. Be troubled. This is not. The end of the story. The upper room. And all its fear. And darkness. Is not the end of the story.

For them. Even though they were there. Even after the resurrection. Until he himself. Came. And. Broke their fear. And revealed himself. To him.

Them. As their savior. Our darkness. In life. Is not the last word. In Christ. In Christ. We are in his heart. We are in his mind.

We are in his purpose. We are in his plans. And I often think. We think. Far too little. About that. And about the reality. Of what we possess.

And what we. Have to look forward to. In Jesus Christ. I am making. The way there. Through the cross. And so when we sit. At the Lord's table.

- [24 : 45] Today. We are. We are. We. Retaking. All. Of this circumstance. To ourselves. We are hearing these words. And you.
- We hope. And pray. By the spirit. In our own lives. And circumstances. And he also. Reminds us. That the. The cross. Is.
- The functional reality. The way that. Our redemption. Is. Bought. For us. But then he goes on. Further.
- To say. And with this. I close. Jesus said to them. When Thomas. Who. As Thomas. Wasn't always that clear. In his understanding. Says.
- Well Lord. I don't know. We don't know where you're going. How can we know the way. And there's. This. Remarkable revelation. Of. Who Jesus is.
- [25 : 39] His. Unique relationship. Bond. With the father. Father. That there is one God. One God. Who is both. As it's revealed. As the Trinity. Is being.
- Slowly unpacked to them. Father. And son. And then. Holy Spirit. He says. Jesus says to them. I am. The way. The truth. And the life. No one comes to the father.
- Except through me. That is the most exclusive. Claim. That has ever been made. And you talk about that claim. Today. In the world. In which we live. You will be laughed at.
- And you will be mocked. And you will be opposed. Because of its exclusivity. But maybe sometimes. We all fail to recognize. Its exclusivity.
- It's. The boldest. Of all claims. That we have here. From Jesus Christ. It's not. That he simply. Teaches. The way to the father.
- [26 : 32] It's not that he just. Shows the way to the father. It's not just that he even. Opens up the way to the father. Through the cross. But rather. He is. The way.
- The truth. He is the way. Because he is the truth. And the life. Because he is God. And what he is reminding us. All. Is that. In all of our needs.
- It is not. A knowledge of the way. Or it's not an understanding. Academically. Or intellectually. Or theologically. It is an entrusting.
- Of ourselves. To the person. Who is the way. He is the way. Himself. Jesus Christ. We are made. Not just to know. About him.
- But to be in relationship. And trust. Our lives. To him. And recognize him. As our Lord. And savior. Worship him. As Lord.
- [27 : 27] And God. Because that is what sin. Has destroyed. Satan has come in. And said. Did God really say that? Does he love you?
- Is he the one. Who has the keys. Of life and death? You can be your own king. You can be your own Lord. He's made you. But you don't need him now. And yet.
- What Christ. Reminds us. Is we must be those. Who come under his lordship. Who recognize our sinful hearts. And our lack of love for him.
- As God. And even our lack of love. For one another. We all fall short. Of his glory. We all. Have abandoned him. As the way.
- And it is Jesus Christ. And in relationship with this Christ. Through faith. By the power of the Holy Spirit. As we repent. And turn to him. And cry out.
- [28 : 26] That we find. This great future. And this great hope. So. Ultimately I guess. What we're saying is. Make Jesus Christ.
- Your home. Make Jesus Christ. Your home. Spend time. With Jesus Christ. Who is your home. Be absolutely honest.

And yourself. With Jesus Christ. Because he knows your hearts. We can't hide from him. We can't have any kind of pretense. But be honest. And confessional.

And forgiving. Before him. Make him. Your priority. Make him. The exclusive. Abode. For your soul. And for your life. The place.

Where you go. The person. That you go to. Let him. Mold your heart. May he. Take your burdens. Hear your confession. Respond to your cry.

[29 : 26] Listen to your voice. And your questions. Accept your worship. And wait on him. As the one who is. Providing. A relationship.

That is eternal. And that is. Unimaginably. Great. There is no. Home.

Anywhere else. Anything. That we have. That is out of Christ. Is from him. But. Is temporary. We need.

To be in. Jesus Christ. Because when we're in Christ. We've come home. We've come to the place. Where we were meant.

To be. We have tasted. Of the heavenly gift. And we have. Known. In a. Shadowy. Small way. What lies ahead.

[30 : 24] For us. And the table is. There. For that reason. To enable us. To. I believe. As I said last night. Is more than a bare.

Remembrance. To be a place. Where we meet with. In a powerful. And real way. The Lord. And Savior. Jesus Christ. When I.

First. Preached. This sermon. For some reason. I had had a very bad week. Which happens. Occasionally.

And somebody. On the morning. That I was to preach this. Sent me an email. A friend. From. Isaiah. Chapter 46. And.

Verses. Three. And four. He said. Listen to me. Oh. House of Jacob. All the remnant. Of the house of Israel. Who. Have. Been. Born. By me. From before your birth.

[31 : 20] Carried. From the womb. Even to your old age. I am he. I am. He. And to gray hairs. I will carry you. I have made. I will bear.

I will carry. I will save. God. That's our redeemer. And. In him. We are home. Let's bow our heads briefly. In prayer.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.