

The Way

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[0:00] Twenty years ago, a young kid sat up in that mezzanine up there.! Half his hair was bleached white.

He was pretty new to the city. He didn't know anything about this place. He'd even been questioned on his way into the car park, whether he knew where he was going, whether he realized he was parking at a church.

And that kid was pretty troubled. Confused in life. And there were a few things going on that made this passage seem really attractive.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Because to that kid, God felt like a boss. He was constantly getting angry and frustrated when this kid didn't measure up to him.

God was like an angry boss. And 20 years ago, roughly, that was me.

[1:14] and I have the privilege of opening this passage for you all this morning we're going to let me pray Father I just want to thank you for how you lead us and you have so kindly given me the responsibility this morning of sharing your word with people I thank you that it is powerful and that Lord you have shown us who you are in your son Jesus please help us to see him this morning through the power of your Holy Spirit just like Martin Luther did Amen I'm going to tell you another story 500 years ago five men had gone out to lunch they were blind their meal had been great because they knew what to water and they walked out arm in arm walking down the main street of their town and then they encountered something strange it was something huge something living something unknown and because they were blind they surrounded this thing reached out their hands to try and figure out what it was the first said this is a very strong snake the next thought it was a huge plant with big fan-like leaves another had wrapped his arms around it and said this is the trunk of an ancient tall tree one ran his hand along it and said

I'm leaning on a wall and the last had trouble holding on to what he said was some kind of a rope this is my version this morning of an ancient parable found in Hindu and Buddhist texts and the parable is called the blind men and the what?

elephant different versions of this parable are shared nowadays by religious sceptics to illustrate how world religions are all holding on to some bit of the truth about God but it's a truth they can't fully see it'd be arrogant for any religion to claim otherwise but Jesus claimed exclusive rights in the God business we just heard it in John 14 verse 6 when he says this I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me so are the sceptics right?

are Christians arrogant? or more to the point is Jesus arrogant? over the next three weeks we'll be looking into Jesus' claims to be the way the truth and the life John who's leading today and I are going to join with Steve through this series he's preached these sermons before and inspired by him we're going to be taking these three steps together and we hope thinkers will believe we hope believers will think will you be led to believe?

will you be led to explore what you believe in and find deeper joy confidence and hope in the claims of Jesus Christ?

[5:04] when Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life he is making an exclusive claim that only he is right and if he is right anyone else's claims about God are wrong so today we begin to test these claims with the first Jesus said I am the way the way to God so our three points for today are these three the dilemma of Jesus' exclusive claim the sweetness

of Jesus' exclusive claim and how Jesus' exclusive claim leads away from arrogance to humility so let's begin with the dilemma of Jesus' exclusive claim in John 14 Jesus is providing his disciples with truth that must be believed if they are their faith is to be triumphant and peace present in their troubles he tells them that he is departing to his father's mansion to prepare a room for them he assures them that they know the way there and at this point

Thomas speaks up in verse 5 and says Lord we don't know where you were going so how can we know the way I don't know if you've ever been to a foreign country or a big city where you've never been before and you've got to get somewhere might be to your hotel it might be to go see a friend it might be just to get from where you are to somewhere safer in the city imagine opening up your phone and you're all prepared you've got an internet plan and you go to Google Maps and you type in your address and Google Maps just comes up with a message that says you already know the way you already know calm down you've got this no no I'm not calm in that moment at all how frustrating would that be Thomas's question implies that the way Jesus takes to God the Father is going to be the same way the disciples will take to get to the Father but Jesus clears up Thomas's confusion he stops talking about his own way to the Father and tells the way the disciples will take have a look at verse 6 I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me the way of Jesus was the cross the way of the disciples is Jesus because Jesus took his way he himself became the way for all people he really is insisting that he is the exclusive way to God and we must grapple with the magnitude of this claim when you take a look at Jesus he's a great teacher he taught people how to love each other he himself was kind to the poor and the outcast he healed the sick and fed the hungry as he invited others to do the same throughout history others have taught and lived likewise so why did

Jesus Christ this teacher become the most influential figure in history not because of some of the nice things he said and did or even just because he did those nice things and said those nice things better than anyone else ever it's actually for the controversial things he said and did the outrageous claims of Jesus Jesus is humble gentle kind loving weeps with the weeping is gentle with children he joins the strongest commitment to justice with astonishing mercy and grace he is tenderness without any weaknesses he's boldness without any harshness he's humility with towering confidence his character is strikingly beautiful and compelling this week

I thought about Mark 5 I want to give you some homework right now if you're taking notes second half of chapter 5 of Mark is a beautiful witness to Jesus character he embodies transcendent self-sufficiency and get entire trust and reliance on his father combined with majesty with like humility with no modesty his character and his actions were so completely unself-centered to the point where he raised a dead little girl from the dead and said don't tell anyone and yet his claims about himself are so completely self-centered powerful meek approachable and majestic a man called

[11:02] Hudson Smith in his book the world what the world's religions it's called he says that only Jesus and Buddha so impressed those around them that they asked not just who are you but what are you he makes the case that these two men had characters so far beyond ordinary human life that that question what are you became necessary Buddha said openly and clearly that he was not God or a God or an angelic being of any kind but Jesus was totally different he repeatedly claimed to be the God the creator of the universe we can't truly see the real Jesus until we take in the vastness of his claims here's just a few about Jesus that Jesus made about his own identity they're going to be on the screen in full but let me summarize

John 8 58 Jesus said before Abraham was 2,000 years before Jesus Abraham before Abraham was I am John 16 28 Jesus says he was eternally with God and always will be in John 17 11 he was and is a one being with God the average person in Chatswood in Australia thinks well enough of Jesus maybe with some reservations in there he's a pretty good guy does some good things right but if you open the historical accounts of Jesus in the Bible just like the book of Mark for instance you will see that

Jesus is always trying to avoid being just thought well of in fact he's not interested in us liking him with reservations at all he wants us to love him on his own terms if we listen to Jesus with intellectual integrity he pushes us to our extremes we must either embrace him on his terms or reject him all that Jesus claimed as he taught everything it's either the worst things ever said or the best things ever said either he is right and we have to adore him or he is wrong and we destroy him but how dare we just like him number two the sweetness of

Jesus exclusive claim let me show it to you it's important to see that when Jesus says no one comes to the father except through him that he's not just saying that without him you can't know anything about God he's saying that he is the only way to come to God and really know God the father there's a real sweetness in that word when we begin to understand it Jesus is promising so much more than just information about God he's promising intimacy and connection with God Jesus is the only way to change God from being a boss into a father he's the only way to turn a relationship with God from fear and uncertainty to absolute confidence warmth and love

I have three children and my three kids know that when I ask them to do something to help around the house and they say yeah sure dad and then go and watch the cricket or a movie or something that there will be consequences but I know they're not worried about being fired or let go as my kids they have so much confidence well enough confidence in my love for them that they often and boldly ignore the requests I make of them they know I'm their father and not their boss but what they can't fully understand is they haven't been able to dig down to the depths of what their dad would do for them I moved up here by then but in 2008 there was a father who took his two very young sons fishing at

[16:18] Tarthra Wharf in New South Wales down near down the far south coast where I grew up and yeah that's the wharf there it's a notoriously dangerous stretch of water the current comes really quickly around the point there and it's very very deep really tall ships used to pull up against that wharf very safely it is very murky and deep but the wharf is picturesque and the fishing is great lots of very very large fish down there if you know how to catch them and as it got dark on that day this dad and his two kids and a whole other big crowd of people some locals and some tourists were there fishing together and then all of a sudden the pram with the youngest son and the other son the toddler were in the water the father jumped in to save his kids and a tourist fishing nearby who heard the first splash he jumped in after the dad to try and save the kids the tourist trying to help was rescued and revived and survived the father and his kids died it was a tragedy that devastated the region and when my first child was born only a couple of years later

I remembered this dad his name is Shane I remember holding each of my kids first my oldest and then as he grew and then my second and my third I have thought about that event every single time I know I would do the same for them even as a normal flawed average dad I'm going in but Jesus is saying here is that there's no other way to find this kind of confidence in God our father a confidence that God would love us even more extremely than I love my own children the way to find that confidence in God is to see the way Jesus lived to show us God's love there is no other religion that declares

God loves us with perfect father grade love God is not a disconnected uncaring creator he's not a frustrated angry boss no other religion declares that once we are in you can't be fired from that religion God is not malicious every other religion philosophical system even the no religion is right way says that if you follow their special advice and live in a particular way and obey their rules then you will achieve the goal of life but Christianity is good news not good advice Jesus has not come to show us how to strive in life instead he did the striving in his life for us he didn't come to show us a mountain of good living to climb to the top or die he climbed it and he died measuring up to the standards of

God our father must be done for us because we are incapable of living up to his standard Ephesians 2 explains why we can't do it from verse 1 you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live all of us also lived among them at one time we were by nature objects of wrath God's diagnosis of the human condition is that we are in danger of death we are in a state of real and present death all people all around us all look very much alike usually you walk down

through Chatswood their bodies are active their minds are sharp and creative their personalities are overflowing with pep and zest but in the area where it matters most the human soul for many there is no life for everyone without

Jesus there is no life we're all blind to the reality demands and the glory of our creator God we simply do not love him he is dead to us and spiritually us to him there is a wonderful book called Deeper written by Dane Ortlund about what it might look like for you to explore a relationship with God in an ever deepening and deepening way and he talks about our bleak spiritual situation like this there's a quote we were not drowning in need of being thrown a life preserver we were stone dead at the bottom of the ocean Jesus pulled us up breathed new life into us and set us on our feet and every breath we now draw is owing to his full and utter deliverance of us in all our helplessness and death

[22:31] Jesus saves that's us we are helpless hopeless and in great peril unless something is done for us to save us dead people cannot do anything for themselves we cannot act to save ourselves and the very next verse in Ephesians 2 declares the good news of Christianity like this because of his great love for us God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions it is by grace that you have been saved in seeing our state of spiritual death God acted with grace he knows our true state and what is required to fix it and we might try to climb the mountain to

God to be good enough to get up to the mountaintop to him but we are dead on the mountain frozen and forgotten so Jesus climbs it for us to die in our perilous place to lift us to the mountaintop he went to the cross to be the way to God for all people Christianity isn't good advice on how to improve your life it's not mountaineering tips it's not swimming instructor lessons it's life altering news there is only one way you can have your sins forgiven and be saved one way to be raised from spiritual death one way to know God as the father and that is Jesus himself it's so sweet to think about this

Jesus claim is exclusive of all who do not believe in him but it is the most inclusive claim God's grace allows the weakest and the worst to come not just the strongest and the brightest not the best mountaineer or the best swimmer everyone it excludes no one when someone says and I heard this a lot growing up even from those who were in churches with me in the country I'm good and so I know I'll find God or maybe someone you know has said something like that surely a moral person will go to heaven or find God one day those statements are very exclusive the premise behind their exclusive claim is that the moral find

God not the bad but the good there is an exclusive claim in that that elevates one type of person over another and their way of life over another Jesus says it's those who acknowledge they are bad and come to him those who acknowledge they are dead and at the bottom of the ocean that cry out to him trust him in his work they're the ones who are in those who see their sin and offense against God the humble are in and the proud are out friends the sweetness of Jesus exclusive claim is this the way to God is not a way of life it's a person Christianity is the most inclusive exclusive claim because it's open to all people even the worst of us you see how that kid 20 years ago sitting up in that mezzanine needed to hear that that's why this passage is my favorite not because it's just don't be troubled let me tell you how to live it's do not be troubled

I am the way to your father and here's how this exclusive claim of Jesus leads us away from arrogance to humility if you belong to any other religion or philosophical system that says you're in because of your efforts or your standards or the way that you do life your belief your knowledge or your culture then you have to in so many spheres of your life you have to feel superior over other people who are out if you're a secular person who thinks that all religions are only ever partly right then you have to feel superior to those poor fools who think that one religion is completely true remember the parable I told you at the beginning about the blind man and what we know is an elephant the point of that parable is every religion has part of the truth the elephant and yet none see the complete truth but did you notice how

[28:11] I told you that story I didn't tell you what they found you guessed at the end but I didn't! you because the only way you could possibly say that the blind men are holding part of an elephant and not a snake or leaf or a tree or a wall or a rope is if you can see the elephant

as if you are not blind you think every religion is blind that means you think you are not the only possible way to say nobody has superior knowledge knowledge unmerited grace this means that when you talk to pretty much any

Buddhist atheist it's likely that they are better than you but Christian you are not saved because you are better by the way you have taken but by the way that Jesus took Christianity is the only exclusive claim that creates a spirit of humility amongst all people who received the gift of a relationship with God their father by grace we are to really know God as our loving father by receiving Jesus offer not earning it in response Christians should be the most loving to anyone who disagrees with them the most forgiving to those who wrong them the most patient with those who try them the most humble and gentle with anyone unlike them only by grace not by their own way could that be you the gospel

I had embraced and I'm still not sure whether I had heard this in churches I'd gone to when I was young but when I was sitting up there in that mezzanine I expected God to be mad like an angry boss at a worker because I felt like I couldn't measure up and that any love from God I had to earn verses 8 and 9 of John 14 say this don't you know me Philip Jesus answered even I after I have been among you for such a long time anyone who has seen me has seen the father how can you say show us the father see what Jesus was saying to Philip they don't make their own way to the father have you been around me for so long that you don't know me

Jesus claims to be the way to God Jesus died to be the way to intimacy with his father because we could never make it walking that way never live a perfect life like him Jesus offers us his way lived out and the prize life with God the father life eternal with God our father father and then it's our joy while we live to follow Jesus way of life to please our father God who will never let go of us even as we stumble and fail along the way before you heard from Jesus today or maybe even right now does

God feel like a angry or frustrated boss to you or like the good loving father that he truly is do you sense the sweetness and even the embrace that God is willing to bring in this good news is your journey with God mere knowledge about God or a safe intimate relationship with God in Acts 4 verse 12 says this about Jesus salvation is found in no one else there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved let me say it one more time the way to God is not a way of life it's a person so

[34:28] I invite you follow Jesus with me Jesus is the way as