

John 14: 1-4

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[0:00] Well, greetings to you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am really privileged to be in your midst this morning. I had a strange experience with this well-known passage not long ago.

So it happened almost like, as in a story, what I've heard about an economist who walked down the street with a friend.

The economist stepped over a 20-pound bill that was lying on the ground, and his friend asked him why he didn't take the money.

It couldn't possibly be there, he explained. If it were, somebody would have picked it up. I use this story usually when I talk to unbelievers, and it's fitting to their problem.

[1:10] But with some kind of irony, I realized that this well-known passage for me is like that.

I just step over it because I know it is well-known. We were brought up almost on these precious words of Jesus.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. Well, but there is always something new among the treasures of God.

And a good scribe has to bring out old and new from the harvest of last year and from the fresh harvest of this year.

You have to carry out. Well, the story is, for me, about a discussion between Thomas and his master.

[2:16] And I'm going to focus this morning on that particular discussion. You all know Thomas. Thomas is the type of the apostle who has always doubts.

He is the one who is seeking and searching and waiting up and has doubts. And you know the story with him after the resurrection, that he said, I believe Thomas rather than Jesus.

Why am I saying that? Because his finger was him, himself. He said, I do believe my finger rather than Jesus. But a man's finger belongs to that very person.

So I am identical with my finger. And that was his failure in his doubts. That he tried to believe always himself.

He tried to rely on himself. And now, all of a sudden, he heard Jesus telling them that I am going to leave you.

[3:36] I am going to my father. I am going to stay with the father. The destination of my journey is the father.

And the father should be the destination of all journeys. Any human being who is not heading toward heaven is a fool.

Your final destination, it should be the father's house. In my father's house are many rooms. Encouraged Jesus, his disciples with this word.

But before that, he says, believe in God. Believe also in me. Or we have in this translation, you can see down there. You believe in God.

Believe also in me. It's like taking as a fact that you already believe in God. Believe also in me. There is the destination of the way.

[4 : 41] And that is the father. Believe in the father. God as the father. Or you already are believing in God as the father.

Now it's your turn to believe in God, the son. The son also. And why is so important that?

Because in my father's house, there are many rooms. And I go to prepare 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. Where I am, you may be also. So the destination is the father himself.

God himself. And because I am also God. God the son. I prefer to have you where I am. In me. That's the purpose of my journey.

[5 : 46] And I know how weak you are. I need to take you with me. And bring you there. Because you are not in the right place. You are outsiders.

You are not insiders. This is my mission on this earth. To take you and bring you to heaven. To my father's house.

And if heaven will be your destination. Then it's not just that you are. You will be included in heaven.

But heaven will be included. Heaven will be in you as well. You know the famous characterizing of one of the Puritans. People used to tell heaven was in him before he was in heaven.

Well, I think it's very clear. It's very simple and clear and plain. How Jesus put in words what he wanted to tell his disciples.

[6 : 50] And yet, Thomas, we found, again, having doubts. He says, when Jesus stated, 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? Just notice that what Jesus said can be translated in another way as well.

Down there, it says, where I am going, you know, and the way, you know. So you know both the destination, the end, and you know the way, the road, which leads toward that end.

You know them both. And then, Thomas asks, Lord, we do not know where you are going. Honestly, we do not know your destination.

We do not know the end of this way. How can we know the way? Let's stop for a while, just for a moment, and try to understand what is behind of Thomas' question.

[8 : 08] It is so human. It is so rational. It is so, I would say, pragmatic. Just give me the goal.

Give me an end. And I will make my way toward it. Just show me the destination. And leave with me, how can I get there?

That's my job. Your job is to show me the final destination. And I will make my way toward it. It is the way how we humans are usually reacting or working.

If there is a clear goal, then you can achieve what you want. You can put an effort to reach that goal. But if the goal is not clear, if you don't know where we are heading, it's very difficult to take even a step toward it.

So Thomas was human, and it's understandable. He just said, you as a savior, your job is to show us the destination.

[9 : 23] And leave the way with me. I trust my ability. I trust my brain, my creativity, my effort, my strength.

I trust my brain as my finger. Because I believe in myself. In my finger, in my brain, in my effort, in my strength, in my deeds.

In my obedience. In my God-fearing life. That's what in what I believe and in what I trust and rely my life.

Is that your finger not identical with you? Is that your creativity, your brain, your effort, is that not belongs to you?

It constitutes the very being, the very person to whom it belongs. So, with other words, Thomas was suggesting Jesus that the Father can be the destination.

[10 : 33] God can be the end, the goal of our journey. But the way how I can reach him is with me. It's me.

I am the way. So, behind his question, we feel like he was stating, You can be the end of the road, but I am the road.

I am the way. To which Jesus immediately replied, No, you are not the way. I am the way. It's amazing, isn't it?

It is a discussion with a fierce argument between Jesus and his disciple. And it somehow shocked me how true is also in my life.

We heard that your minister telling us that story when he was three years old. It's in our nature. We want to do, we want to strive for a goal and show that we are able.

[11 : 44] We can do it. We will do it. Certainly. Just show us a clear goal. And that's, although on a human level is very natural, it can be very sinful in spiritual matters.

In fact, this is the greatest sin when we try to neglect the son, although we believe in the father. We try to avoid him as our own way.

We might accept him as our goal, as our destination, as our God. But not in terms of following him.

Because Christianity is all about following the master. But it does matter how you do that. It's not indifferent whether you are doing the job toward that end, or he is taking you there as your way, not just as the end of your way.

It's a huge difference here. So Jesus said, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.

[13 : 08] And he is very strong on that, except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my father also. Now this discussion becomes even stranger.

He says, if you had known me, you would have known my father also. But just a few verses before, Jesus stated in verse 4, you know the way to where I am going.

You know both the way and the destination. And now, Jesus would question, almost contradicting himself, if you would have known me, you would have known the father.

Why is that? It looks a paradox statement, isn't it? But the reason is, because Jesus said, you assume if you would know the destination, you would know me.

No. In spiritual life, it's the other way around. If you would have known me first, then you would have known my father also. If you would accept me first as your way, then you can find my father as your destination.

[14 : 24] You know, I've heard in English, you are the same proverb, almost the same proverb, that the end justifies the means.

Is that correct? That's how you say. Now, we are even worse in Romania. We would say, the end sanctifies the means.

Terrible. But, you see, what we've got here is the other way around. The way, the means are justifying the end. If you accept Jesus as your way, that can put it right about your destination as well.

And you cannot avoid that with him. And then, as I said, Jesus is questioning Thomas' knowledge.

Although, in the beginning, he just referred to Thomas that he knows. How is that? Well, you see, in our therapy center, as you heard, we are dealing with addicts.

[15:36] Several times we say, you are doing your job only in your head. You've got your therapy in your head. It's nothing to do with your real life.

Nothing to do with practice. You are just accepting the truth in your head. But it is not linked with the reality.

Now, I'm going to make you very uncomfortable about this. Is that not true? So many times, I'm also included in those who had to be uncomfortable this morning.

Is that not true? That sometimes we agree with God's truth. We accept his truth. And we praise him for his truth, even.

But in reality, that doesn't work. It's not a real life issue for us. It's just in our minds we agree.

[16:40] And Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. When things are going uncomfortable, there is always a disciple there, another one, who says, this is going very complicated.

Stop, stop. Let's make it simple. Just show us the Father, and that's enough. Why are you going so far? Why are you pricking us with doubting whether we were taken the way as we should, and so on?

It's going very uncomfortable. Stop, stop. Just, it's more simple. If you would have shown us the Father, and that would be enough for us. The great simplifiers.

These are the guys who don't want to think through it. Who don't want to examine themselves. Is that truth which I embrace really working in my life?

Do I know myself? Or maybe I just accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and as my destination. And God should be pleased with that.

[17:56] No. God is very interested whether you also accepted Him as your way. Don't try to simplify here the things.

It should be complicated. It should be hard. It must be hard. Because this is an issue of life and death for you. It's more than that.

It's an issue of eternity. 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? So, who have seen the way, could see already the destination.

And he goes on saying, Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? Well, let's stop for a moment.

[18:57] You are claiming that you are believing in the truth. You are believing in me, Philip, and Thomas, and all the disciples.

You claim because in your head, you really believe in me. Okay. But was that, what that exactly means, to believe in me? Jesus answers that question.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? So, let it put in practice. Believing in Jesus means to believe that he is in the Father, and the Father is in him.

Now, there was a great scientist, Pascal, who said that the rivers are roads in motion, and they are leading always to the sea.

The way is simply from, the way is equal with the destination. The water of the river brings you to the sea, and the sea is also water.

[20 : 09] The same water which takes you to the sea is also the destination. Because the Father and me are one.

Be a Trinitarian, please, Philip. Philip and Thomas, you doubting Christians, are you really believing that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me?

Like the water of the river goes into the sea, and the sea is, the same water is included in each other.

And then he goes on saying, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his work, does his works.

Believe me, he says again in verse 11, believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. That's very nice and very interesting for me.

[21 : 16] My dear friends, if we believe that the way is included in the destination of that way, and the destination is already anticipated in the way, then we are at the very core core of what you would call faith.

Because faith hopes for the things which are not seen yet. The faith works like anticipating the future, because the future is already here.

By faith we can grab it already, although it might be at a distance still. And that's the way how the Christian life works.

Now, let me stop for another point here. Usually, there are many Christians who would be happy to believe in Jesus, and besides, to have a moral standard.

They like the, let's call it Christian morality, and they feel to do things morally bound. Or duty bound.

[22 : 36] There are even non-believers who would accept the Christian morality, or a high morality, and they would work according to that moral scheme.

And there are Christians who would never check whether their morality sprang from the cross, or from the gospel. They just assume that what they do, it's good and right, and they can comfortably live their lives.

But now, there is a difference between calling and moral duty. Do you agree with me?

There are, on the field of moral values, or if you like, in the Christian morality, there are things to which we are duty bound.

But I am not duty bound to live in Stornoway. You are not duty bound to live in Cluj, except if you were called to. If you were called by God to live in a certain place, you might not be morally bound, but you might be vocationally bound, you might be called.

[23 : 53] And anybody's calling is so holy that whatever I am bound to, you might not be bound to.

It's a difference. And sometimes, we Christians, we are not eager to find out our calling. Am I on the right place where God called me to be?

Am I doing the right ministry what I was entrusted to do? Am I in the right place in the right time? You cannot find it out unless you accept Jesus as your way and not only as your destination.

If you accept him to be your way, he will guide your ways. He will show you where is your place. As we read in Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways, acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths. That's the secret. Once I am taken up by Jesus as my way, as my way, then I will understand my calling and I will follow my calling whether it looks morally good or bad, doesn't matter.

[25 : 25] Sometimes, it might look bad. Who on earth would believe that Abraham is not going to kill his son? People would have been outraged.

But that was his calling and he followed it doesn't matter whatever, on whatever coast. Now, I think that there is a very important thing also to see here.

first of all, we said, you believe in God, Jesus might have taken it for granted, you believe in God as the father, but you need to believe in God as the son.

Believe in me. I am your way. But then, we've got the trinity. Why is that? Why we need to believe in the Holy Spirit?

All right, I assume you all agree, yes, we believe in the Holy Trinity. We are not anti-Trinitarians. It's a strange thing. I asked whether you have any Unitarian church in Louis.

[26 : 37] There is no such a church here. We actually have in Romania. They are anti-Trinitarians. But I tell you a shocking discovery.

One day, I have discovered that I am an anti-Trinitarian as well by birth. I was born as an anti-Trinitarian because I accept God, but it's very hard for me to accept Jesus as my way.

And when you don't accept him to be your way, you deny his divinity, his divine right over your life. So you are a practical, one who practically denies the Trinity.

and further on, Jesus would say, believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me and continues in verse 12, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

Unbelievable. but he goes on, and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father.

[27 : 55] Now, look at that because. I am going to the Father and by going to the Father, I want to take you with me. I want to be your way toward the Father.

Otherwise, nobody would believe that Jesus was right. I hope you are so humble in this church that none of you would claim that I've done such great things as Jesus did.

Moreover, even greater things what he did on earth. It's impossible. Oh, that is good. Once you accepted him as your way, you still need to accept with total brokenness of your heart that it is impossible to make Jesus to be my way.

I might agree in my head, and I might be willing to do that, but there is something in my human nature that I can't.

Anybody who knows himself or herself would agree with me at this moment. whenever I tried to imitate what Jesus did, I failed.

[29 : 13] I have many records of my mistakes and terrible sins, what I committed. I know my conscience tells me how bad a Christian I was.

We'd rather say with Paul, I am the chief of sinners. How is that possible that Jesus claims we are going to do the same works as he did or even greater works than these will he do?

He said he gives only one reason, because I am going to the Father and as a result, whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Not you will be glorified in me or in the Father, but the Father needs to be glorified in the Son. The reason why you have to do greater things as Jesus did is because the Son must be glorified.

how is that possible? I know this is your question at the back of your head, because that was mine as well. I have found impossible even when I let Jesus to be my way.

[30 : 40] And then all of a sudden I realized something. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. When you are not able to do something, you need to be enabled.

When you are weak and you confess that I am weak, then it is God's time to carry out his strength through your weakness.

When you admit that you are not able, you are hopeless, you are a sinner, that's the minute when the Lord will give his grace and through the Holy Spirit he can.

He can do the works of Jesus in you and through you or by you. And that's the miracle. You might not be aware of that, like Moses when he came down from the mount, his face was shining.

Everybody noticed him except of Moses. He did not realize that his face is shining. Doesn't matter, but it happened. Now you might be very humble, doesn't matter, but Jesus ought to be shown on your face and ought to be, it must happen that he should work through you.

[32 : 00] To put it in another way, maybe in a surprising way, you don't need to be holy. You don't need to be holy because you aren't holy, but you need to be in Jesus and Jesus needs to be in you by his spirit.

and then he, the only holy one, can be mirrored in your life. And that's holiness.

When you are not pointing to our glory, maybe not glorifying ourselves in our pretended holiness, but we point to the son that the father might be glorified in the son.

If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it. Once you are on the right track, as a train is on the railway, once you are on the right track, who is Jesus, and you are taken toward your destination, whatever you ask for will be granted, because you are on your place.

You are serving the Lord where he called you to do it. Have you never experienced when you were disobedient against God's calling, that your prayers were not really answered, or maybe it were answered in a different way, because gently, but very firmly, God's spirit still was pressing you toward the right way, toward your real calling.

[33 : 36] So, why we need the Holy Spirit? Because the Holy Spirit points to the glory of the Father, which is resembled on the face of Jesus.

And we have to shine this glory in this dark world. We need to get Jesus in our lives like that.

So, the only way how this can be made possible, if we don't desire anymore to be lights, but rather to be the mirrors, when we desire not to be the voice, but rather the echo, that's a holy desire.

Oh, Lord, I don't want to be great and big and holy. I want the only holy person, the Lord Jesus Christ, if he would be in me and would work his works among the people.

May God bless you and answer all your prayers once you are on the right track, once you got your Jesus, not just your destination, but as your way.

[34 : 52] I am the way replies Jesus to Thomas. It's an argument. Have you got that argument with Jesus? Have you had to acknowledge that I am not the way?

The way how I do it is not working. I'm hopeless. I'm just a poor sinner, a wretched sinner, a man who thought he knows something, but he doesn't.

He needs the correction of the Holy Spirit. By Jesus grace, oh, may the Lord answer your prayers. Amen.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we give thanks to you because you said through the lips of Isaiah that your thoughts are not my thoughts and your ways are not my ways.

As far as the heaven from earth, so far is my way from your ways. Oh, Lord, thank you that you first want to say no to our ways in order to affirm your own son against our own ways.

[36 :13] Oh, please, by your grace, help us to find the way, not just the destination, the goal of that way. Help us not to be practically anti-Trinitarian, denying your divinity, but putting practically in a Trinitarian way our faith in line with your word.

Help us when we see that it seems impossible, that that's your chance through our weaknesses that your strength might be glorified.

We ask all these in Jesus' name. Amen.