

Jesus Is the Way

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's great to see you. Those of you who are here and those of us joining on the live stream, it is a joy to gather this morning. We are continuing in our series in the book of John. We're looking at the section usually called the Farewell Discourse. If you remember, the book of John is split into two parts, and the second half is basically one week, the last week of Jesus' life. And what we are looking at this morning is one of the messages that Jesus gave to his disciples as he was preparing them for his departure. So that's where we are at. If you have a Bible with you on your phone or in your hand, you can look there, and we'll read the text in a minute. But just to remember, as we set the scene for our text this morning, I want you to think about, put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. Jesus' disciples had been called by him from the very beginning. Come, follow me, he said at the beginning of John in the gospel. And they followed him. They left their nets, they left their homes, they left their livelihoods, and they had faithfully hitched their wagons to him, and they were headed with him to wherever he was going. They had stayed with him through the end of chapter 6, where his teaching was so offensive to many people that they turned away. He turned to them and said, what about you? Are you going to go too? And they said, where else can we go? You alone have the words of life, of eternal life.

They stayed through chapter 8, where Jesus' teaching and his challenging of the religious leadership that was trusting in their ethnic identity caused them to want to kill him. They had followed him in chapter 11 to Bethany. Do you remember what they said? You can't go there, they're trying to kill you. And then when Jesus showed that he was going to go anyways, they said, well, let's go, at least we can die with him together. They had been faithful with him. And then in chapter 13, as Pastor Greg preached to us last week, he revealed that he knew that one of them would betray him, and one of them would deny him, that Judas would turn him over to the authorities, and that Peter would turn his back. Peter, the stalwart rock one, the one who wouldn't fail. And in the midst of that, he also told them that he would be leaving, and that they could not come where he was going. Can you imagine the questions that rose in their minds? Where is this going?

Where is he going that I can't come? I've committed my whole life to this. Did I choose rightly? What if it fails? What am I going to end up in? What about me? If Peter's going to fail, what about me? What if I fail too? Where is this all going? Friends, as we gather this morning, I wonder if your hearts ever ask those similar questions.

We don't have the similar circumstance that the disciples had, but certainly we face the up and downs of life, and we're seeking for something to make sense of it, for something to give it purpose, for a destination to be worth spending our life pursuing. We look for it often in work, in friendships, in marriage, in schooling.

[3 : 48] But there are often moments, are there not, when we face these times of agitation in our heart, of uncertainty, of confusion. Our hearts are troubled in these moments, are they not?

And friends, the Bible teaches us that all of those troubles that we feel in our everyday lives, in the ups and downs of the challenges and difficulties of life, flow from a deeper underlying question that we all carry in our hearts.

It is the question that the disciples were asking, and it is a question that our hearts are bent to ask as well, which is, will I end up with God at the end? And what if I don't?

Is that my home? Is that my destination? Am I going to be able to get there or not? We don't often consciously ask that question because it's terrifying for it to be a question and not an answer, isn't it?

But it's the question that the Bible posits for us today. It is the right question for us to be asking. And as we look at our passage this morning, and as we think about the answer that this passage gives

to that essential question, it will give hope and help to our troubled hearts, not only in this deepest question, but in all of the others as well.

[5 : 17] So this brings us to John 14, verses 1 through 7. So let's read this together and let's pray then. John 14, verse 1.

Thomas said to him, Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank you for this word. We pray this morning that by your spirit and through my words, you would, Lord, press home this truth to our hearts. Lord, that we might know you, that we might have hope in the way that you have provided.

Lord, I pray that this would be comfort for our troubled hearts and help. Lord, we ask for your spirit to be among us this morning as we look into your word.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Jesus speaks to his disciples and to us with a clear hope for our troubled hearts.

[7 : 09] He says that there is a destination that gives hope, and he makes a declaration that also gives us hope. So we're going to look at those two things in order, the destination and then the declaration that Jesus gives in this passage.

So the destination that gives hope to our troubled hearts is in verses 1 through 5. And what he says is, There is a Father's house that is waiting for you.

There is a Father's house that has many rooms, many mansions. And some of you are old enough to remember some of the songs in the 70s that talked about the mansions that we're going to get as Christians and how big they're going to be and whether they get four or five, you know, garage doors and all this stuff.

Mansions is a poor translation. It means a place to live. It means a dwelling place. It could be just as easily translated an apartment or a flat in a building. But it means you have a place to belong and that is your own, that is a part of this house, this building, this edifice that God the Father owns. It is not something that does not exist yet. Jesus says, There's a house already and I'm going to it, preparing a way for you to go so that you can get there.

[8 : 28] Now, we ought not think that it's like in China where when you buy an apartment building, it's unfinished. You just get concrete walls often and then you move in and you refit it out and you do all that you put in the heating and the plumbing and the walls and everything yourself.

It's not like that. Jesus isn't saying, I have to go and tidy up either. He's saying that these things already exist. What he is preparing is not the destination because God has already designed that. He is preparing the way for us. He is going ahead of us so that there is a way from here to there that we will be able to find.

The way is not ready yet because he has not gone to the cross and gone to his death, nor has he risen from the dead yet. And he is referring to those actions when he says, I am going to prepare a place.

It is going in preparation for this place that I will be able to take you to after those events are done. This is why he tells them in chapter 13, where I am going now, you cannot come because they can't go to the cross with him.

[9 : 38] They can't do that work of atonement that he's going to do there. Only he can do it. But as he does that, then he is preparing a way for them to come with him. And this is the great promise.

He says, I'm telling you, I'm going to a place where you can't come right now, but I'm going to prepare a place so that you will know that there is a place for you. And when I come back, once I have gone, I will come back.

And when I come back, I will take you with me. And where I am, you will be with me also. And this is the great promise.

Jesus is looking ahead. He knows he's going to die, rise again, be ascended to the Father, but that one day he will come back. And as the Bible promises, believers who are still alive on earth will meet with him.

He will raise the dead and we will all be gathered to him in this house. And the Bible nuances it. It's not that we're translated out of earth to some other thing, but he's going to bring heaven down to earth and God will create his dwelling place among people with us and his house will be here.

[10 : 48] And the most important thing about that house is that we will be with Jesus. And so to the troubled hearts of the disciples, where they're thinking, wait a minute, did I hitch myself to the wrong wagon?

Because it sounds like he's going and I'm going to be left behind. Jesus says, no, no, no, I am going, but you will not be left behind because I have made a promise. I will come back and I will take you with me. I will not abandon you. I will not forsake you. But I am the one in whom, when you put your trust in me, it is safe for me to take you. You will end up in my father's house. And he says, and you know this, I've been teaching you this, I've been telling you this, this is what this has all been about. You know where we're going. And Thomas says, uh, actually, Jesus, I don't, I don't know. [11:52] How do we, how do we know? How do we know the way there? Because we're not even sure about the destination. Isn't it beautiful the way the Bible helps put these things in us to make us not feel stupid?

We're like, well, sometimes we don't know what God is doing. Sometimes we lose sight of where he is taking us. And honestly, sometimes we can even be in church for a long time and not know the answer to the question, do we know the way to God? Often, if you ask people on the street, and even in our church at times, do you know the way to God? Well, I think it means being a good person, faithful to our personal ethics, serving the poor, protecting the environment, protecting life, live without lying, cheating, or stealing, be a person of integrity, find your own way, be true to yourself. That's, that's a, that's a way, isn't it? Isn't that what God wants from us? Others of us find the church community to be a great place. And so we find, well, being busy at church, I'm faithful in doing the actions that I'm supposed to do. In some church traditions, it's, I'm faithful in doing the personal spiritual practices, the sacraments, and the rituals. I'm following through on personal piety. For some of us, it may be, I'm committed to the truth of this church. [13:16] I've got my theology right. I've got my, my ducks in a row. I've got my points and my sub points and my sub sub points all right and lined up. My understanding is right. And I have all the answers to the questions. And it's easy to think if we have these things in place, then we know the way to God. But Jesus in this passage, as he responds to Thomas, gives an answer that is shocking. If those are the things that we are trusting in, if those are the things that we think, show us the way to God, all of them are good things. All of them are a part of God's kingdom in, in, in many ways when they're done in a God-centered way. There is nothing wrong with any of those things that I talked about when it is done for the glory of God, but they are none of them the way. Jesus says, it is not our actions, our thoughts, or our character that are the way to God, but it is a person. It is him. This is the declaration. This is what this passage is leading up to. Verse 6. Let's look at it and read it again so we don't lose sight of what he says. [14:32] This well-known verse. Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. It's not Jesus teaching. It's not his example or its direction. Did you notice what he didn't say? He didn't say, I have shown you the way, I have given you the truth, I have brought you the light. He didn't say those things in, in, in a way where he can somehow offload those things to you, and then it's up to you what you do with it. He's saying, I am the way, the truth, and the life. In the Greek, it's even emphasized. Ego, a me. It is me, my person, myself, that is the way for you to know God. And friends, let's just take a moment and review what have we learned about this Jesus in the first 13 chapters. Believe me, we'll do this quickly. But, because there's a lot. [15:43] It's a beautiful gospel, and so there's a lot there. What have we seen? Jesus has come to be light in our darkness. I am the light of the world, he says in 812. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. He says then, as well, he says, I am life to you in your death. In 1125, he says, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Jesus says, I am the truth that brings freedom. In verse 8, starting in 31, he says, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin, but if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

And finally, Jesus is the atonement for our sin. If you weren't in Sunday school, you should go back and watch it this morning, because Tim taught on Leviticus, and the day of atonement, and the way that death was a necessary punishment for sin, and how the Old Testament sacrifice prefigured what Jesus would do by showing the sacrifice of animals, that death was the right and proper punishment for sin against the Holy God, preparing us to see what Jesus would do.

[17 : 13] And so when John in verse 1, in chapter 1, verse 29, says, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. When Jesus himself, just two chapters before, in chapter 12, verse 32, says, And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.

And he said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. Friends, if you've been coming to Trinity, and you haven't heard this yet, hear it this morning.

This is what Jesus has come to do. He, the very person of God, has come to earth in human form to rescue us. To rescue us from our rejection, in our sinful rebellion.

We want to have life apart from him, without having to reckon to him, or answer to him. And in this state, we find ourselves lost, troubled in heart.

And we find ourselves separate from God, under his anger for our, for our rejection of him, and alone. And wondering, how can we find our way back to God?

[18 : 25] To us, Jesus has come, in this situation, and said, I am the way and the truth. No one comes to the Father, but through me. But, I know some of you are thinking, but you have got to be kidding me.

This is not good news. Many of us would hear, a claim of exclusivity like this, in our modern world, and say, this is the worst of all things.

This is what leads to oppression, violence. It is anti-intellectual. It is divisive and destructive. There is a whole lot of conversation, that we could have about this, but I want to take a particular angle, this morning on it.

And that is this. I think many of us respond that way, because many of us, have experienced religion, as a form of tribalism. I am in, I am out, I am better or worse, depending on the tribe, or the group that I, belong to.

Now, we know this is a human impulse, that we have all the time. We build ourselves up, by attacking others, and differentiating ourselves, by others. This is a human, this is why we have, the Hatfields, and the McCoys.

[19 : 41] This is why we have, the Capulets, and the, oh, I forgot that one. And, this is why we have, the Sharks and the Jets, in West Side Story, right? This is also, why we have, Northern Ireland, and Ireland separate.

This is why we have, Pakistan and Bangladesh, separate from India. Because religious people, have struggled to get along, with one another. And in this tribalism, there has been, great atrocities. And the church, has not been unstained, by this spirit, at times. And we need to own that, and we need to see it. And I think that, in response to this, we retreat, to say, aren't all religions, different ways, to the same God?

Aren't we like, the blind men, and the elephant? The one who touches the leg, thinks the elephant is a tree. The one who touches, the trunk, thinks the elephant is a snake.

The one touching, the tusk, thinks it's a spear. The one touching the side, thinks it's a wall. And we retreat to that, because that makes sense, and it makes us think, well, we're not going to fall, into that tribalism, because aren't we all one?

[20 : 53] Friends, let me just say this. This fallacious image, only works, if we would, have the arrogance, to claim, that we alone, can see the whole elephant, and no one else can.

The only way, to deal with the way, that the elephant, is experienced, in human life, is to experience, each religion, to explore each one, and to count, to look at it, on its own merits, and to decide for yourself, with intellectual honesty, whether there is one, that is compelling, above any other.

And if it is, then we need to look, at the character of it. This brings us back, to Jesus. What do you think, of Jesus?

Because, the exclusivity, of Christianity, has not been, a 2,000 year project, for tribal, building up, and the exclusion, of others. According to the Bible, the exclusivity, of Christianity, is based on, the

uniqueness, of Christ.

If Christ, really is, who he says he is. If he really is, the way, the truth, and the life.

[22 : 15] How could this be true? Well, think through, these logical points. If we were created, to know God, and live in relationship, with him. If we really are sinful, as it appears, when we honestly, evaluate our lives.

If we really are, as lost as it seems, and we experience, the troubles, of our hearts, and the fog, that we live in. If Jesus really is, God, in the flesh.

If Jesus really did, take on human form, so he could represent us. If Jesus really did, die on a cross, after living, a perfect life. If Jesus really did, die in our place.

Then he alone, of all religions, in the world, is claiming something, unique. That he has addressed, the problem of sin, and how a sinful, humanity could be, find its way back, to a holy God.

God. By being God, coming to us, and doing what we couldn't do, for ourselves. This is the uniqueness, of the gospel.

[23 : 19] This is the good news, and this is what the church, has always proclaimed. This is why in Acts 4, the disciples proclaim, there is salvation, in no one else. There is no other name, because no one else, has done what Jesus did.

It's not his teaching, it's not his moral example, it's not the institution, that he founded. It is his person, and his work, of the cross, and the resurrection, that makes Christianity, unique, and makes it exclusive.

And if you are here, this morning, and you are wrestling, with this question, I implore you, look at who Jesus is. Because if that tribal spirit, where Jesus is spirit, all the way through the Bible, and then we sort of embrace that, and take it on for ourselves, well, then you have every right, to say no. But that's not the Jesus. Jesus said, I have come for all men. And in fact, he came especially for those, who are the outcast, the marginalized, the ones on the edge of society.

He came and welcomed them, mostly, as he embraced all people, and he said, all who believe in me, can come. I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

[24 : 38] No one comes to the Father, except through me. And Jesus says this, to comfort his disciples, who were terrified, that they had hitched their wagon, to the wrong story, to the wrong person, and that they were going to be left alone.

Jesus said to them, I will not abandon you. I promise. I will come back. In the end, you will be with me forever. I have shown you the way, because I am the way.

You don't need to figure it out. You don't have to do it all right. All you need to do, is believe. For this is where he began, in verse 14, in verse 1 of chapter 14, right?

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. Friends, this is the amazing good news, of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is that we don't have to earn it.

We don't have to work to do it. All we have to do, is to humble ourselves enough, to admit our need, to see Jesus, and his work on the cross, is sufficient, and gloriously good for us.

[25 : 51] And then to receive that, in trusting faith. Putting our whole selves in that, and saying, that's the only way.

It's the only way, I can get back to God. It's the only way, I can be forgiven. It's the only way, that my troubled hearts, can be comforted. Friends, this is good news.

This is not easy news, in our culture today. There are many who will disagree, and there are many, who will struggle with it. But I do believe strongly, that the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, is the key.

To look at him, as he presents himself, in the words of scripture. This is where we know. And this is where we can stand, to believe in that.

So if you're here this morning, and you've wondered, could Jesus be the only way? I invite you, come look and see. If you've struggled, even as a Christian, to say, yeah, I believe in Jesus, but I don't know, like all these other people.

[26 : 55] It's not that we're thinking, oh, those people are worse, than anyone else, or we're going to exclude. It's that we're saying, no, Jesus and his uniqueness, is the only way. And so, we invite him.

Jesus told these things, to his disciples, not only to comfort his heart, their hearts in the moment, but also to prepare them, for the mission, that he was going to leave them with. As he went away, he was going to leave them, with the mission, of being witnesses, to him, and telling others, about who he was.

And I want us, to have the confidence, this morning, to do that, even in our culture today. So with this, friends, let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this text, Lord, and we are, struck by the words, I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through me.

Lord, we thank you, Lord, for the comfort, that this, these words actually are to us. Lord, that there is a way, and that this way, is knowable, and that you, this way has come, not because we have, created it, or discerned it, or, or, thought it up, but because Jesus has come.

[28 : 14] The word become flesh, dwelling among us, so that we might know, and be saved. Oh, Lord Jesus, I pray this morning, you would strengthen, our troubled hearts, you would increase, our confidence, Lord, build our faith.

Lord, I pray for any, this morning, who are questioning, whether these things, are actually true, Lord, that you would, open their eyes, to see Jesus, and all of his uniqueness, and Lord, that you would give them faith.

Lord, we thank you, for this word, in Jesus name, Amen. We're going to end our service, this morning, by observing the Lord's Supper.

if you're at home, in the, on the live stream, and haven't gathered, your elements yet, this would be a good time, to do this. If you're here, in the sanctuary, and you have not, gotten one of, these little things, or brought your own, you can, the ushers, Mike's in the back, and he can, give you one of those.

Communion celebrates, the life and death, and resurrection of Jesus, reminding us, of what he has done for us, so that we might live, in relationship to him.

[29 : 33] The elements that we take, the bread, and the, and the juice, or the wafer, or whatever these things are, they represent, the body, and the blood of Jesus.

His physical death, bearing our sin, on his body, so that we would not have to. And if you've placed your faith, in Jesus, and trusted in him, for the forgiveness of your sins, and for your eternal salvation, then come, and eat, and drink.

And if you have not, Jesus invites you, believe in God, believe also in me. Trust in the work, that I have done for you. Come into a relationship with me, that I, and know that I am the way, that your heart is longing for.

Let me pray, and then we're going to sing, and then we're going to take the elements together. Let's pray together. Lord, as we come to your table, we are reminded that, Lord, this table shows us the depth of our sin, that sin, the wages of sin is death, and Lord, that our sin against you deserves death.

But Lord, it also reminds us of your great love, and your grace to us, that you, Lord, have come, and taken death upon yourself, for us, so that we might not die, but we might live.

[30 : 53] So that by faith in you, we might be joined with you, not only in this life now, but forever. And that in this troubled life, that we live now, and in the eternity, that awaits us, Lord, the great news, is that we will be with you.

Lord, may we celebrate this table, with sobriety, and soberness, because of our sin, but also, Lord, with gratefulness, for your grace to us, and the salvation that we have in you.

Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.