

3.12.23

**I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life****John 14.1-6****Douglas Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church**

Saying goodbye to someone we love is difficult and often emotional. When we know we're leaving and may not see someone again for a while, we try to share words that are important. You may have done this when you were taking a child to college, leaving home to accept a job, or being deployed in the service. The words you spoke or that were spoken to you may have been heavy with meaning and emotion and you may remember them still. That's what Jesus is doing in John 14 after the Last Supper as he speaks with his disciples as he prepares to leave them. Only he's not moving away, he's going to die soon. His followers are upset and troubled not only because Jesus told them he was leaving soon, but he also announced that one of them was a traitor, and then warned Peter that he was going to deny him three times. It's in that context in the Upper Room that Jesus speaks words he hopes will comfort, guide, and inspire his friends when he's no longer with them.

**“Do not let your hearts be troubled.** Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know **the way** to the place where I am going.”

**Thomas** said to him, *“Lord, we do not know where you are going.*

*How can we know **the way**?”*

Jesus said to him, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.**

**No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

For some of us this is one of the most comforting of all the passages with an “I am” saying of Jesus. It's one I use at the bedside of someone who is dying or at memorial services and graveside services because Jesus' words about going to prepare a place for us and then coming again to take us so that we may be with him are reassuring to a person who is dying as well as to us when we've experienced a loss. We're grateful for the hope that we'll see our loved one again

and see Jesus face to face because of these verses in John 14. Our focus today is on verse six and what Jesus means when he says ***I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.***

### **Jesus is the Way to Pursue**

The first thing to note is that Jesus spoke about ***going the way*** himself before he spoke about ***being the way*** for others. When Jesus speaks in **John 13:33, 36** about ***“where I am going”*** – he’s referring to his **destination and his route.**

### **Jesus’ Destination**

In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ speaks of going to the one who sent him (7:33-34), and God sent Jesus (John 5:23-24 & 6:38-39). Jesus has come from God and is going to God (John 13:1, 3). Jesus says he is going to his Father’s house with its many rooms (14:2-4). Jesus is going to the Father. The Father is his destination. He’s saying, ***“The Father is where I am going, and I am how you will get there.”***

### **Jesus’ Route**

The route Jesus will take to his destination is his passion – the betrayal, suffering, and death he will soon endure, culminating in the resurrection – all of this is **the way** by which he returns to the Father (12:27–34). Jesus speaks about going where no one else can go (13:30-33). He’s going by way of the cross. The disciples don’t understand the way of Jesus prior to the passion as Thomas makes clear by objecting, ***“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”*** (14:5).

Jesus says, ***“I am the way”*** (14:6) after he’s spoken about ***going the way*** himself (14:4). The word **“way” (Greek *hodos*)** was used for paved roads that linked cities and carried a steady stream of travelers, soldiers, and merchants across the Roman Empire; it was used for the dirt paths that meandered from one village to another. **At another level, the term was used for a way of life.** The Scriptures call obedience to God **the way of truth** (Psalm 86:11; 119:30), which brings life rather than death (Psalm 16:11; Proverbs 15:24; Jeremiah 21:8). **Long before Jesus, prophets like Isaiah (30:21) spoke of the Way of the Lord, “And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying “This is the way; walk in it.” Isaiah 48:17**

declares, “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord your God, **who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go.**” In **Jeremiah 7:23**, God gives this command, **“Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you.”**

Before people who followed Jesus were called “Christians” (Acts 11:26) they were known as those **“who belonged to the Way” (Acts 9:2)** because **following Jesus means living the Way of self-sacrificing love Christ taught us to live.**

### **Jesus is the Truth to Believe**

**Jesus says he is the Way, and the Truth.** Jesus is the embodiment of the truth. Why is truth important? You don’t want to live your life based on a lie or build your life on something that isn’t trustworthy, dependable and life giving. When truth is absent so is trust – this is true in a friendship, a marriage, or a family; it’s true in a church, a state, or a nation – if someone isn’t truthful, then it’s hard to trust him or her and respect and confidence in that person diminishes. When Jesus says he’s the truth he’s saying we can trust him, we can rely on him, we can believe what he is telling us is so because he is the perfect revelation of God. Since there were different Jewish traditions in Jesus’ day, it was difficult for a Jewish person of the first century to know which tradition was God’s will. Jesus is saying he is the truth; he embodies what people need to know and believe of God. He models who we should be and what we should do as children of God.

### **Truth is an important word in John’s Gospel**

**The beginning of the fourth gospel sets the stage for who Jesus is and what he comes to share.** *“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory; the glory as of a father’s only son, full of **grace and truth.** The law indeed was given through Moses; **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ.”* John 1:14,17

To know the love of God that Jesus reveals is to know the truth that sets you free from the grip of sin as you live the way Christ taught. *“Jesus said...,” “If*

*you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the **truth**, and the **truth** will make you free.” John 8:32*

In John the Holy Spirit is also known as **the Spirit of truth**. Jesus says, *“When the Spirit of **truth** comes, he will guide you into all **truth**; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” John 16:13*

Finally, during his trial, Jesus has the following exchange with Pilate, the political leader with the power to condemn or release him: “Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the **truth**. Everyone who belongs to the **truth** listens to my voice.” John 18:37

By going the way of the cross and resurrection, Jesus embodies **the way** that leads us to know **the truth** about him; that we can rely on him and trust him and believe he is who he says he is.

### **Jesus is the Life to Hope For**

Thirdly, Jesus says he is **the Life**. Jesus is the source and power of believers’ resurrection to eternal life as he told Martha in John 11. In the I am sayings of Jesus the word that keeps coming up is **Life**.

**Week 1** – “I am the bread of life.” John 6:35

**Week 2** – “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

**Week 3** - “I came that they may have life, & have it abundantly.” John 10:10

**Week 4** “I lay down my life for the sheep.” John 10:15

**Week 5** “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, **will live**.” John 11:25

**Week 6** “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” John 14:6

Jesus talks about it in a lot of different ways, but it’s clear that what Jesus is trying to give to all who will receive him is **LIFE**.

Life that is truly satisfying and meets our deepest hunger and needs.

Life that illuminates our path.

Abundant life that begins now in the present.

Life that has been given to us by someone else giving up his life.

Life that conquers death.

True life which is found on the way of humble, self-sacrificing love.

Jesus is the way of self-sacrificing, humble love and invites us to follow him daily. He is the truth who can be trusted and depended on. He is and offers abundant, eternal life.

That brings us to the final sentence of John 14:6, *“No one comes to the Father except through me.”* Jesus is saying that salvation doesn’t come through the law, sacrifices, religious practices, or the overthrow of foreign oppressors—all of which were beliefs held by Jews in the first century. Instead, Jesus Himself is the channel through which people can have a relationship with God the Father and spend eternity with God.

All people are separated from God because of sin. Fallen humanity meets **God as a Judge**, not as a **Father** or loving parent, except by Christ as Mediator. We can’t have the joy of coming to God as our Father without the advocacy, merit, and righteousness of Jesus Christ. No one is being excluded - all humanity is in the same situation. *“No one comes to the Father, except...”* The word “except” is like a window that lets light into a closed room. When I was a boy, my dad who got up around 4:45 in the morning, would come into my room to wake me up, thankfully not that early. He would take the roll up shade and give it a pull and the whole shade would go flying to the top and flipping around a few times. Light would flood the room in an instant and my dad would say, **“Rise and shine.”** Jesus is like the light that floods a darkened room and give us hope. People have asked me questions like, *“What about everyone else? What about people of a different faith or no faith? What about people who never had the opportunity to even know about Jesus? What happens to them?”* I don’t have time to answer that fully in this message, but here are a few things to remember.

It's important to hear John 14:6 within the context of the Bible as a whole. Let’s start with some foundational beliefs. First, Christians worship the God who created the universe, including the heavens and the earth and all living creatures, including humanity in the image of God. Second, we know the character or

nature of God from many Bible verses. In **Jeremiah 9:24**, God says, *“I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight.”* We believe in and worship a God who acts towards all people *“with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness.”* In **1 John 4:16**, a marvelous chapter about love, John states, *“God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.”* In **Revelation 7:9-10**, John is describing who he sees in heaven, *“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. 10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

**We worship a God who will be loving and just towards all people.** It’s important to emphasize what we **know** as followers of Jesus rather than to *speculate* about what we can’t know which includes exactly what happens after we die. **We know** judgment belongs to God alone and we should not delight in the death or condemnation of anyone, nor should we presume to take a role that is God’s alone by acting as if we know what will happen with any person. **We know Jesus says**, *“In my Father’s house are many rooms.”* **We know** God wants us to live **the way** of humble, self-sacrificing love which Jesus lived and taught. **We know** we’re to share **the truth** about Jesus, so that as many people as possible can experience the abundant and eternal **life** of those who trust and follow in the way of Jesus. **We know** that in Jesus **we find the way to God, the truth about God, and life in all its fullness in relationship with God.** **We know** we are always to be ready to give an account of the hope that is *in us* because of Jesus, and we are to do so with gentleness and respect with those who don’t share our faith or beliefs (1 Peter 3:15).

Thomas à Kempis, in his book, *the Imitation of Christ*, iii., 56), writes that Jesus is saying, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is*

***no living. I am the way which thou shouldst pursue; the truth which thou shouldst believe; the life which thou shouldst hope for.”***

Jesus' coming into the world to make God known is an inclusive act (John 1:18). John 3:16 tells us Jesus is God's gift of love for the world, for everyone. The goal of Jesus' coming into the world is that people come to know God and live their lives as God desires following the Way of Jesus. Jesus shares with people what he has seen and heard from God and carries out God's work in the world offering life that is truly life to all who will receive it. Jesus bridges the chasm that separates people from God. Through him people may come to know and be in relationship with God. Follow **the way** of Jesus each day, believe he is **the Truth**, and he will lead you to eternal abundant **life**.

**Prayer:** Jesus we thank you that you were willing to go the way of the cross for us and we thank you almighty God for raising Jesus to life. Help us to follow Jesus in his way of self-sacrificing love, enable us to live according to his truth, thankful that we can trust and rely upon your word. Finally, we humbly rejoice that you have graciously provided for all of us the gift of life we all are seeking – life that even conquers death. In Jesus' name, amen.

**Blessing:**

Grace, mercy, and peace be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love. May we as God's children walk in the truth, just as we have been commanded. (Adapted from 2 John 1:1-4)

**For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.** Ephesians 2:10

**Questions for Discussion or Reflection**

1. What do you find comforting about the words of Jesus in John 14:1-6?
2. Is there anything you find uncomfortable or disturbing? If so, what?

3. Is it possible that John wants us to be comforted and uncomfortable at the same time? Why might he desire that kind of response?
  
4. In John 14:1, Jesus says, "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*" Why do you think he says that considering his destination and the route he must take? What is "the way" Jesus is referring to?
  
5. Truth is an important word in John's Gospel. Why is truth important to Jesus and to the writer of the fourth gospel? Why is truth important truth to you, to a church and a society?
  
6. Thinking about this "I am" saying of Jesus and the previous ones, what kind of life is Jesus trying to give us? How would you describe it to someone who isn't a follower of Christ? What is it like?
  
7. What will you take away from this "I am" saying as you go your "way" through the rest of the week?