

16th January 2022

I Am The Way, The Truth, and The Life

Bible Reading: John 14:1-14

Many cities in Australia today are multicultural. Over the years, people from all over the globe have found their way here. They've all brought with them their languages, their traditions, food and clothing—and they've also brought their religions. So, when you drive around, you see quite a few church buildings, and you also see Islamic mosques and Buddhist temples. There are many kinds of people here, and many religions.

Now we shouldn't take for granted how all these diverse people can exist alongside each other in peace. Freedom of worship is a good thing, because it means that we can lead peaceful and quiet lives of serving God.

But there's also a danger in a diverse society like ours. The danger is that people sometimes think that all these many religions must lead in some way to the same God. We're all looking in the same direction. Religions have different names, different scriptures and traditions, but they all amount to the same human quest for 'salvation,' or the Higher Being.

That sounds good and tolerant. And it could be a way to get out of an awkward conversation at university or with your co-worker in the office—'yeah, we all believe in God.' But it just doesn't agree with what the Bible teaches. There's only one God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, and there's only one way to know him truly.

For Scripture says that Christ alone is the Redeemer of sinners. It says that before Christ every knee shall bow, and that no other name is given to mankind by which we must be saved. We love the hymn 'In Christ Alone,' but that message—the Christian message of hope only through Jesus—actually offends a lot of people. It's exclusive.

But this is what Jesus said in v6, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" You can take that negatively. Or you can focus on what's positive about it: that there is a way to the Father, there is a truth that can be known about him, and that in Christ there is a life that lasts forever! This is our theme today from John 14:6, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*":

1) Christ is the way - 2) Christ is the truth - 3) Christ is the life

1) He is the way: Someone's last words are important. When a loved one speaks to you just before he or she passes away, you better listen carefully. These might be things to remember always: maybe a last confession of faith, some words of encouragement, or instructions for when the person is gone.

That's what is going on in our chapter. Jesus is with his disciples in the upper room, the place where they have celebrated one last Passover. Christ is just about to be betrayed and arrested, and soon He'll be dead. In fact, by this point of the evening, Satan has entered Judas, and he has gone into the night. Looming over John 14 is the dark shadow of the cross.

Yet these words are full of hope. All the way from 13:31 to the end of chapter 17, Jesus is gently teaching His disciples. He's telling them important things about who He is, why He has come, where He's going—and also about what they must do once He's gone.

In this hour of his coming death, Jesus knows that His disciples are troubled. But there really is no reason for anxiety. Once all the suffering of the next few days is finished, Jesus is going back to the Father. That's where He came from, and that's where He'll be returning to.

And here is the really good news that Christ shares: if heaven is the destination of Jesus, then it's also the destination of his followers! Listen to what He says:

"In my Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (v2-3). He won't leave us orphans. His believers won't be refugees forever. From the first moment we believe in Christ, we are homeward bound!

'I will receive you to myself.' It sounds simple, yet the disciples aren't so sure about this. They question Jesus about what He's saying exactly, not just once or twice, but three times. First Thomas does in v5, then Philip in v8, and Judas (not Iscariot) in v22.

For example, notice the question that Thomas asks just before our text. Jesus has just said, *"You know where I'm going, and you know how to get there."* And then Thomas says, *"Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way?"* (v 5). In other words, what on earth did Jesus mean about going to the Father? What did He mean about knowing the way to God and to glory?

It's not that Thomas and the other disciples didn't long for God's presence. His covenant people have always desired to draw near to God, like in Psalm 42, *"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"* (v 2). A true child of God will want closeness with God, rejoices to seek him—that's what we were made for.

Jesus has been teaching his disciples about this pathway for three years. So, by John 14, He can say to the disciples in all seriousness, *"You know the way back to God. If you know me, then you know which path to take. I'm going to glory soon, but our separation is only temporary. Soon you'll come after me, and you'll be with me. But whether now or later, you can come to the Father only through me."*

We get a picture of this from the ancient world. Imagine a powerful king seated on his throne, like a Pharaoh or Caesar. Any access to his presence would be carefully controlled by one of his officials. Not just anyone could approach—and certainly not on your own. If you dared to come near, it'd probably mean certain death. But supposing that king had a beloved son, he would put aside the requirement. No permission needed: his son could freely enter. And even the friends of the son, if they went with him, they could go in to see the king. That's who Jesus is: He is the beloved Son. And for us sinners, when we go with him, He is our way back to the heavenly Father.

When Jesus says this, He doesn't mean that He found the way. He's not like one of those intrepid explorers who charted a route to the North Pole. Christ didn't find the way: He is the way! When we are joined to him by faith, when our life is hidden with Christ, He brings us to the Father.

Listen to what Hebrews 10 says about the work of Christ, *"Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart"* (v19-20, 22).

Because Christ died for sin on the cross, the way to God is now open for all.

But here's the thing. There is one requirement to go this way, that we are united to Christ by faith. It's through being joined to him in love. Remember who was allowed to go in and see the great King: only those who are the friends of the Son.

And who are his friends? Christ says in the next chapter that his friends are those who know the things that He says, and who put them into practice. You're known by the company you keep; by the people you spend so much time with, you begin to resemble them. So, are you

the friend of Christ? Are you spending the kind of time with Christ that you are being conformed to him? Is it your life's one aim to trust in Christ, and to live by his Word in everything?

2) He is the truth: We live in a time of mass confusion, moral chaos, and social unrest. So many people just don't know what to think anymore. Not that there's a lack of information.

We can put our fingers onto more resources and knowledge than anyone who lived before us. So many websites, so many experts, so many theories, so many ideologies—and that's the problem. Who do we believe? How do you sort through it all and know who to listen to?

A bit later in John's Gospel, we hear a haunting question. It's asked by Pontius Pilate, with Jesus before him on trial. Jesus has just told this Roman governor that He came to bear witness to the truth. Then comes Pilate's question, "*What is truth?*" (18:38). That's the same thing many ask today: "What is truth?"

It's the spirit of this age to say that no one has a monopoly on the truth—no one can say that theirs is the only way. And finding truth becomes so difficult because of who dominates this world, the devil. In John 8 Jesus called Satan a liar, and "the father of lies." With Satan still prowling, the truth will always be under attack. So, people agonize: "Is this behaviour, right? Where is God, and who is God? Is this God worthy of my worship, or should I look somewhere else? What is truth?"

Christ is the truth. When we have Him, we have access to the very truth of God. For to know the Son is to know the Father! Though God is far above us—eternal, immortal, invisible—in Christ we learn about God's character. For when we look at Jesus, we see the God of amazing grace. At the same time as we look at Jesus, we see the God of steadfast patience, and never-ending faithfulness. When we look at Jesus, we see the God who is perfect justice, and awesome holiness, and heavenly majesty.

You can tell that the disciples still don't get it. Listen to what Philip says a few verses later, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us" (v 8). Philip wants a special revelation, but there is no need, because Jesus is in God and God in him. His words and acts are the words and acts of God. So, Christ has to say it again, "*He who has seen me has seen the Father*" (v 9). He embodies God's own truth, so real you can see and touch and hear it.

In many of the religions in this world, God is the mysterious 'other.' Their gods are impenetrable, usually distant, and often unpredictable. Even when people say that they have rejected organized religion, they keep looking for meaning, for purpose, for 'god.' A Christian thinker named Blaise Pascal called it a 'god-shaped hole' in everyone's life. And this God is elusive, hard to find, always shifting in shape and meaning. The god you're looking for ends up looking a lot like yourself!

But God allows us to know the truth. There's no need to presume or speculate or imagine what God is like. We know it from his Word, and we learn it from Jesus His Son. And Christ also shows the truth of what this God expects from us.

That's such a gift, because believers have always struggled to find out God's will. We wish that God would tell us the truth about what we should do with our life, what to study next year, what vocation to pursue. We wish God would tell us how to solve this difficult problem in our family, or in the church. But God doesn't tell us everything, and He doesn't lay out the next five years of our life plainly for us to see. But through Christ, God does tell us the truth about how we are to live in this time. Love God. Trust Jesus. Serve your church. Love your neighbour. Go with the Lord. If you know Jesus Christ truly and fully—even if you know little

else and you still have heaps of questions—then you know what Pontius Pilate didn't know. If you know Christ, then you know what so many millions today still don't know. You know the truth that is able to set you free!

3) He is the life: Most of us at some time have been busy doing what we call 'making a living.' Monday to Friday, we're going to work, we're running our business, doing our duties to earn our pay—to make a living. Some of us are preparing for those days (learning a trade, going to school), others are retired and looking back on them. But life is about much more than earning a living. Christ says, "*I am the life.*"

This is what Jesus said in John 10:10, "*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly!*" He wants us to have the abundant life, a flourishing life, a life that is worth something. **What is that?** What does it look like for you to have your best life now? It's not measured by prosperity or power or even good health. The best life—the only life—is the one where you are right with God. It's when you have a living communion with your Creator through his Son, in the power of his Holy Spirit. It's when this relationship has an unmistakable and unstoppable way of changing everything about you, even the things you didn't want to be changed!

In fact, knowing Christ must change everything in your life, because let's appreciate that without him, we are dead. That's our natural state: even if it looks like we're making a living, we're dead. Even if we're very busy with this life, we have no pulse: spiritually dead, and on a path towards an eternity of the same.

It's not enough then, to know the way to God—for you to be familiar with Christ. It's not enough to have learned lots of truth about God—for us to have Bible knowledge. We still need someone who can make us alive, can resurrect us! And this is who Christ is. He is 'the life.' He restores life to what it was meant to be: lived with the Father, lived in the very presence of God.

When I say 'the presence of God,' you might automatically think of heaven. Trouble is, heaven can seem impossibly distant from our lives here on earth. But Jesus says that when we believe, we have access already. When we believe, we've already crossed over from death to life. Already we have a sense of the joy and the peace of being in the Father's house.

Even if we die, we live. For when we die, we are homeward bound: headed for the Father's house. Time then, to return to the beginning. All around us there's a lot of people who don't know the gospel, or who've forgotten it, or rejected it. And knowing that these neighbours of ours, and countless millions more, have never heard the name of Jesus, we might give up. What can ever be done? Where do we begin? Most of them will probably throw it back into our faces.

Yet the church remains the hope of the world. For God has called his church to bring to all people the name of Jesus his Son. It's a serious calling, for no one comes to the Father except through him. No, the Bible doesn't give us a message that is politically correct. It's uncomfortable to quote John 14:6 out loud. Yet we stand on this truth, and we can share this truth:

- There is a way to the Father, and the way is wide open.
- There is a truth about God that can be known for certain.
- There is a life with God that lasts forever.

And you can get it all through faith in Christ Jesus! Amen.