

## Sermon – 26/3/2006 pm

### The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Study Text: John 14:4-6

*Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (14:6).* We come to another of the great 'I am' proclamations in this gospel and perhaps the most well known. But well known does not necessarily mean well understood! We will be asking ourselves today do we understand what Jesus was saying. We will also be exhorting one another to make these words of Jesus even more widely known, for we have here the answer to the 'lostness', the falsity and indeed the death that pervades this world in which we all live.

What is the context in which spoke these words? He was answering a question put to him by Thomas, one of his disciples. Thomas is known as 'the doubter' because when told by the others that they had seen Jesus risen from the dead he said *unless...I put my finger into the print of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe (20:25)*. Jesus answered his doubt then just as he did here – *Jesus said to him.*

But it was not only Thomas who was troubled by Jesus' words. He asked on behalf of them all. *Lord we do not know* he said. Peter had already questioned Jesus about where he was going. Jesus told them he was going away to a place where they could not follow – at least for a while. What did he mean? He meant he was going to die.

Jesus was going to die a unique death such that none could follow. It would a substitutionary death, a propitiatory death. Jesus was going to his Father's house he said. He would not only die but would rise again and ascend to heaven in a unique way. He even told them he was coming back again and would bring them to join him in this place.

*Where I go you know and the way you know* Jesus concluded. But this was all too much for Thomas. He protested that they did not know the place he was going so how could they know away. It was a logical question but the premise was false. They did know the place. Jesus had told them where he was going. They knew more than they thought they knew.

While it is fine to ask questions, it is not good to keep asking and not listening to the answers. In class some students are always asking questions, not because they want to know but because they want to appear smart or to catch out the teacher. They may well know the answer but often such a person is so busy asking questions that fail to listen and learn.

In the big question about life and death it is the same. Some people take pride in being questioners. I once listened to this grey-haired old preacher saying he was still working on putting together the puzzle of life. He had most things worked out but there were a few pieces missing. He still had a few unanswered questions. I thought to myself 'you need to hurry up with those remaining pieces in your puzzle old man or you are going to run out of time'!

Dear friend, you have got it all wrong if you think you are putting together the puzzle of life. Jesus has completed the puzzle and calls upon you to take it complete, and not to start pulling

it apart or think that you can put it all together. This is not being presumptuous as that old man probably thought. You can know the way, the truth, and the life.

You know the place, and you know the way Jesus told Thomas. ‘You are asking this question while staring the answer in the face – literally’! He was asking Jesus who is the way. ‘The way dear Thomas is standing before you’! Do not be one of those who proudly question God while ignoring the answer already given in Jesus Christ.

## The Way

In this trio of ‘I am’ statements ‘the way’ predominates. Jesus was answering the question about knowing the way. ‘The truth’ and ‘the life’ have been dealt with previously, but this is not to discount them in any way. Jesus adds them to complete the picture of who he is. Each of these three words is preceded by the definite article, so we cannot read it as ‘Jesus is the way to truth and life’ or ‘Jesus is the way of truth and life’. He is the way, the truth and the life.

The Lord told Moses to depart from Mt Sinai and take the people to the Promised Land, the land of rest (Exodus 33). But he also said ‘I will not go with you’. Moses knew better than to go on without the Lord’s presence. He knew that it was only by the grace of God that he had reached Mt Sinai with the people of God. Moses prayed *show me now your way that I may know you and that I may find grace in your sight* (Exodus 33:13). Moses knew that there was only one way to go and that was the Lord’s way. He wanted to know the Lord and his grace. The Lord answered ‘*my presence shall go with you and I will give you rest*’.

Way is a simple word but a very important one. Have you ever been lost – in the forest or in the desert or anywhere? Last time I was lost was in the city – in New Delhi. I had left our friends house in a taxi to take my wife to the train. I failed to take my diary with addresses and telephone numbers. These were the only people I knew in the whole city of over 10million. I was lost and turned to the Lord in prayer.

To be lost in the desert is more disastrous. People have died after losing their way in the desert. They start to follow mirages and can miss true waterholes. So it is that many today are following what appears to be the way, but if they ignoring Jesus then they will surely perish.

Jesus said I am the way. He did not say he shows the way. The Bible does that. Jesus did indeed live a perfect life and we are told to imitate him (I Corinthians 11:1). But we cannot do that in our own strength. We cannot obey the law, we cannot live by the ‘sermon on the mount’, we cannot get to heaven without Jesus. Jesus has indeed opened the door by his death, but more than this he is the door. You cannot take even one step on the way unless you are ‘in Christ’.

*No one comes to the Father except through me.* Jesus adds these words making it unequivocal that he is the way and the only way. These words stand in total opposition to the teaching of the world today. If it is presumptuous to say ‘I know the way’, the world labels it as outright arrogance to say Jesus is the only way. Pluralism is the ruling philosophy of our day – but that may be changing.

Hinduism influenced New Age thinking with the idea that all rivers eventually flow into the sea, or that all roads lead to heaven. The road does not matter. It is sincerity and devotion that

matter. Just choose the way that is best for you and you will get there in the end – wherever ‘there’ might be. Jesus made sure his disciples knew where ‘there’ was. But as we see devout and sincere men kill innocent people as they blow themselves up in the name of their god, many are reassessing this notion of sincerity and tolerance.

Jesus said he is the only way to the Father's house, or heaven. There are other ways of course but they lead to another place. They lead to destruction. Indeed *broad is the way that leads to destruction* and many are following that way (Matthew 7:13). But narrow is the way that leads to life. I pray that you are on that narrow way, which is Christ himself.

## **The Truth**

This world is full of falsehood. We hear of it every day. We experience it most days. We are all guilty of it. Some people are even proud of the lies they habitually tell. This world looks down on those who tell the truth. Such a person will not get ahead in this world. The Prince of this world tried to sell the lie to Jesus – ‘if you worship before me all will be yours; you will have authority and glory’ (Luke 4). Jesus resisted this temptation, but millions have succumbed. Satan is the father of lies.

*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* If you don't know Jesus then you don't know the truth, for Jesus is the truth – absolutely. You are living a lie.

Through Jesus all things were made (1:3). Those who don't believe this are living a lie and working a lie. How sad it is to see men and women spending their whole life trying to discover the origins of life. What an utter waste of time, for Jesus tells us that God created life. Others travel the world or immerse themselves in study seeking to find the truth, when all they have to do is open this book and believe.

## **The Life**

*In him was life* (1:4). Jesus said previously *I am the resurrection and the life* (11:25). The life of which Jesus speaks is eternal life. It is life that conquers death. This world is marked or marred by death. Do you know of anyone who has escaped death? Death comes to us all – rich or poor. Many accept that death is the end. They think that life in this world is all this – so let us eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

Jesus, however, speaks of life. He said he is the life. He who *believes in the Son has everlasting life* (3:36). To know Jesus Christ is to have eternal life (17:3). Jesus died but after three days he rose from the dead, victorious over death and the grave.

Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life. What a beautiful and powerful summary of whom Jesus is. Do you know where Jesus has gone? Do you know the way there?

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