

I AM...the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)

Reading: John 14:1-14

Jesus said, 'I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

We might be a bit put off by the boldness of these words, with our modern pluralistic sensibilities.

He does not say that He is one among many legitimate possibilities;

He is the Way.

He does not reassuringly claim that He brings one truth among numerous credible truths;

he says He is the Truth.

He offers himself not as one life to be selected among many lives;

He says He is the Life.

But in our day of flexible plurality...with choice and diversity...

We don't like these exclusive sounding words Jesus uses to describe himself.

What is the context in which Jesus says these words?

He was answering a question put to him by Thomas, one of the disciples.

The disciple known as the doubter

because he wouldn't believe Jesus had risen from the dead...

till he could put his finger in the scars of Jesus.

But it was not only Thomas who was puzzled by these words of Jesus.

He asked his question on behalf of all the disciples... 'Lord, we do not know the way.'

It was a logical question, but a false foundation.

They did know the place...Jesus had just told them where he was going.

They knew more than they thought they knew.

Deep down I think the question is really about life and death.

In this trio of statements, the statement 'the way' is the most prominent.

Jesus was answering the question about knowing the way.

The way is a very simple word...but a very important one.

Have you ever been lost before?

In a city, bush, desert?

I have a friend who can get hopelessly lost on what might even seem like rather basic trips.
Well, to overcome the problem they bought a GPS.
Just punch in where you want to go and it maps it all out for you.
Now there should be no excuse for them to get lost!

It is amazing how the system can plot where you are and where you want to go simply using geometry linked to satellites that are positioned above the earth.

To be lost is bad... but to be lost in a desert is disastrous.
People have died after losing their way in the desert.
They start to follow mirages, they miss waterholes.

In the movie Australia they are herding the cattle to Perth for shipment in the war effort.
Enemies are trying to stop them, so have polluted the waterholes on the stock route.
The only path left is through the desert.
And for that they needed a guide.

To the rest of the world they were considered as lost,
having died in their foolishness in trying to cross the desert.
But they triumphantly make it into town and sell off the cattle.
How did they survive?
They followed one who knew the way.

It's like that today...
Many appear to be following a way...but die lost.
If we ignore Jesus we die lost.

Jesus said, 'I am the way.'
But notice: He did not say... he shows the way...the Bible does that.
He did not say...he is A way.

Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'.
So how many ways are there to God?

This is an important question today.
It is important because almost everyone claims to believe in God.
It is important because people want to find a way to connect with God.

How many ways are there to God?

Jesus answers that emphatically when he says,

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Don't forget, this is one of the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus that we are studying this year during Lent.

In these statements Jesus wants us to think of God speaking to Moses out of the burning bush; at that time God identified Himself as "I Am Who I Am."

By using the same expression, Jesus claims divinity,
He claims to be God's equal,
He claims to be part of the eternal Godhead.

So how many ways are there to God?

People today want to believe all paths, all roads, and all faiths lead to God;
they want to believe that all religions are equal.

People want to believe that all people will be saved.

So, for instance, they believe Mohammed, Buddha, and Confucius are on a par with Jesus and the faiths or religions started by these men are as valid as the Christian faith in bringing one to God and heaven.

Even Christians make some bold statements about different ways to God:

Scott Maclaren (Preacher) says that when Jesus speaks of "many mansions" he is insisting that there are places for people of all faiths and all backgrounds in the divine home, so Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims and Jews will all dwell alongside Christians in the hereafter.

As a Christian pluralist or universalist he believes that others with a special relationship will be there at God's right hand too. People like the Buddha, Lord Krishna, Mohammed, and Moses and that it seems very unfair to be reading in this passage a claim by Jesus that God couldn't be accessed through other religions.

So how does Maclaren address Jesus claim to be "the way, and the truth, and the life."?

For Christians who follow in his footsteps, Jesus is the way to a God-filled existence, and Jesus is the truth of what a fully spiritually-realized human being looks like.

A study of the Bible shows us that people have tried all sorts of ways to get to God and heaven.

During the Old Testament period, for instance, Israel's neighbours thought they could get in touch with God through the sacrifice of their children, or by dancing and screaming as they did with Baal in the contest against Elijah.

During the New Testament period, there were those in Israel – like the Pharisees – who thought they could get in touch with God by observing the Law and its rules and regulations.

How many ways are there to God?

People want to believe there are as many different ways as there are different people and beliefs.

I'm always surprised by anyone who thinks all roads lead to God,
that all religions are equally valid.

Nobody believes that about anything else.

I wonder why anybody believes that about religion.

Yesterday Anita and I drove down to Angelsea for a Vic Ministers and wives get together.
We travelled on the road that would get us there...

Does every road lead to Angelsea?

Might have ended up at Lakes Entrance...rather than Angelsea.

You get the picture – it is impossible to believe that all roads lead to the same place...

So why say all faiths, and all religions lead to God and heaven;
that all are equally valid?

Jesus cuts through all this nonsense about other paths, other faiths, other ways when he says:
"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

You need to realize that this is an intolerant teaching and it makes the Christian faith an intolerant religion.

It gives no saving credit to other religions.

I know this is heresy from the world's point-of-view.

I know the worst sin today is the sin of intolerance.

But the fact is, Jesus Himself is intolerant of any other religion or faith.

Jesus tells us there is only one path that leads to God – Jesus.

All paths do not lead to God and heaven.

Only one path does.

And that path is Jesus.

Jesus Himself spares us from having to dabble in all sorts of religious activity.

We don't have to try and make a connection with God.

We don't have to earn our way into heaven and the presence of God.

We don't have to believe weird things and do weird things.

All that we need is Jesus.

Jesus is not the only person who used the expression "the way."

Shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven it was used to identify the early church.

Saul, before he became Paul, went to Damascus to persecute members of "the Way" (Acts 9:2).

And later at Ephesus there arose a great disturbance about "the Way," when Demetrius stirred up the silversmiths (Acts 19:23).

Before the governor Felix, Paul admitted he was "a follower of the Way" which the Jews "call a sect" (Acts 24:14).

Within the Old Testament this idea of "the way" appears often.

The Exodus, for instance, is the way out from the slavery of Egypt to the Promised Land.

Think, too, of the words of Isaiah the prophet that foreshadow the ministry of John the Baptist:

(Isa 40:3) A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD ; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God."

In our text for this morning, Jesus has all of this in mind – and more!

What exactly does Jesus have in mind when He says this?

The Way is not a following of traditions handed down from generation to generation by the rabbis of Israel.

It is not the learning of doctrines from and about Jesus.

It is not what Jesus said.

It is not what Jesus did.

It is not what the disciples wrote about Him.

It is not what can be found in the hundreds of theology books in my office.

The Way is Jesus Himself.

The way is a person.

Strictly speaking, a way is a road going somewhere.

It is not an aimless, wandering way.

It has a destination, a goal.

So, for instance, the Exodus was the way out of Egypt and to the Promised Land.

And the Hume Highway takes you out of Melbourne and on to Sydney

Jesus is the Way – to the Father.

Jesus is the Way of Salvation.

He doesn't tell us about the way...he is the way.

Don't forget, Jesus says this just before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

He says "I am the way," just before He hangs helpless upon the cross.

He says "I am the truth," just before the lies of evil men nail Him to the tree.
He says "I am the life," just before He Himself is placed in the tomb.

But it is precisely because of His death and resurrection, Jesus is the Way of Salvation.
Jesus is the Way because He died for our sins.

The Truth

The world is full of falsehood.

We hear 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.

Joel Fitzgibbon 'made a mistake' when he failed to declare gifts given to him.

The problem in the media does not seem to be about his having told a lie...

But the process in which that was discovered...whether that was a good path.

Our world even looks down on those who tell the truth.

But Jesus is the Way and the life and teaching of Jesus is Truth.

This truth is recorded in our Bibles.

The life

'In him was life.' (1:4).

Earlier Jesus said, 'I am the Resurrection and the life (11:25).

The life of which Jesus speaks is eternal life.

It is the life that conquers death.

This world is marred by death.

Do you know anyone who has escaped death.

Death comes to us all...rich or poor.

Many accept death is the end.

They think that life in this world is all there is.

So eat drink and be merry...for tomorrow we die.

But Jesus speaks of life...he is the life.

Whoever believes in the Son has everlasting life.

To know Jesus Christ is to have eternal life.

Jesus died...but after three days he rose from the dead.

Victorious over death and the grave.

Jesus was distinctive and was able to do what no-one else could.

Our world is in an undeniable mess...

and each religion has its own way of trying to deal with this mess.

All of the other religions offer self help programs.

Work hard and you will deliver yourself.

[Monkey in the Bog]

But Christianity is unique.

Because God sees the mess and comes down and rescues us ourselves.

Christianity is grace, not effort.

Jesus says, 'I will come back and take you to be with me.'

And he did, and he continues to do that.

Through his death and resurrection he showed that death is not the end of the journey.

Jesus opens up for us that way back into a glorious eternal future...

In a living relationship with God our Father.

Conclusion

Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).

That says it all, doesn't it?!

Jesus is the Way! So, entrust your heart and life and soul to Him.

For, there is no other way, there is no other path. He is the Way, the only way, to God and heaven and salvation and eternal life.

Then we will gain the life we can never lose.

Thomas a Kempis in the fifteenth century had this to say about these immortal words of Jesus:

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 oughtest to follow; the Truth which thou oughtest to believe; the Life, which thou oughtest to hope for. I am the Way inviolable, the Truth infallible, the Life unending. I am the Way that is straightest, the Truth that is true, the Life blessed, the Life uncreated. If thou remain in my way, thou shalt know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free, and thou shalt lay hold on eternal life.

Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'

What a beautiful summary of whom Jesus is.

Do you know where Jesus has gone?

Do you know the way there?