

I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life

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[0 : 00] We have a Bible, we are turning to John chapter 14, to that passage we read from a little earlier and in particular to that very famous text John chapter 14 and at verse 6 Jesus said to them, I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.

The traveller stood by the signpost. He was weary, he was tired, he was perplexed. Around him radiating out in all different directions were innumerable paths. A dense fog shrouded the hillside, thick and impenetrable.

The signpost itself was so weather-beaten it had become quite illegible. Which way should I go? He asked himself.

I want to find my way to the city of God but there are so many different tracks. Which is the right one? As he pondered his problem, three travellers came up behind him travelling on the same road by which he had arrived.

[1 : 25] Excuse me he said to the first, can you help me? I am trying to find my way to the city of God. Grunted the man.

You don't believe in any of that rubbish do you? These roads all lead nowhere, all that talk about the city of God. Load of mythological clap-trap. If you take my advice you will just pitch your tent here by the signpost and make the best of what you have got.

Well the travellers face fell at the sceptics words. But rather than give up he decided to speak to the second of the travellers who by that time had reached the signpost.

Excuse me he said I wonder if he can help me. Trying to find the road that will take me to the city of God. This time the man simply shrugged his shoulders.

Who can say? Maybe it's this road, maybe it's that road. You can't possibly know which is the right one. All you can really do is to be open-minded and tolerant.

[2 : 32] Just you choose whatever path seems right to you. I would never dream of imposing my views on anyone else. The traveller thanked the man for his advice.

Though privately he had hoped for a little more precise guidance. Perhaps the third man would be able to help a little more. Excuse me I wonder if you can help me.

Can you tell me the way to the city of God? This time his fellow pilgrim simply smiled back at him. Ah my friend that is an unnecessary question.

Because all roads lead to the city of God. They only appear to go out in different directions. They are there beyond the mist and the fog, they all circle back on themselves and converge on your desired destination.

Follow any path, any road you wish you'll get there in the end. This the traveller frowned unconvinced.

[3 : 33] Was it likely that roads to the same destination all started outgoing in radically opposite ways? Surely it was just as possible to take a wrong road as it was a right road.

Which is the right way. And then suddenly out of the fog a fourth figure appeared. Unlike the others he did not come up the same path as the others had used.

He came down one of the other tracks. A steep and narrow one. Excuse me said the traveller one more time. Could you possibly help me? I'm looking for the city of God.

One person has told me there's no such place. Another has told me to be open minded about the whole question. And a third has assured me that all roads lead there. Can you tell me the right way? Indeed I can't said the stranger. For those you have spoken to were really only guessing. They have never been to the city of God so they can only speculate about the route.

[4 : 41] I however live there. The city of God is my home. So come and follow me. I am the way.

There is perhaps no aspect of Christianity more offensive to the modern mind than its exclusivity. Why do Christians claim that Jesus is the only way to God?

Why do Christians say there's no one else will do in a world of so many religious alternatives each held with great devotion and commitment? Why do Christians insist it has to be Jesus?

There are many reasons why Christians make this claim for Jesus Christ but perhaps the most obvious of them is this. This is what Jesus himself claimed.

If one reads through the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life you discover again and again and again that Jesus makes extraordinary even outrageous claims for himself.

[5 : 54] Most religious leaders point away from themselves. You want to find God they ask well go to that holy place. Read that holy book adopt this religious discipline.

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

I mean who does he think he is? See yes Lewis put it like this. Jesus made claims which if not true are those of a megalomaniac compared to whom Hitler was the most sane and humble of men.

There is no halfway house. There is no parallel in other religions. The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is simply out of the question.

And tonight I want to focus on just one of the most famous claims that Jesus made for himself. It's a claim that many of us will have heard before.

[6 : 58] We find it in John 14 in verse 6. Jesus tells his disciples I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The context here is that Jesus is preparing to go to the cross. His disciples are anxious. They are bewildered. They are fearful. They are upset.

They don't really know what is going on. And Jesus is speaking to reassure them. He speaks to them of going to the Father.

They are aware of speaking about going to heaven, being with God. And he wants them to know that this is why he will die on the cross. He is going to prepare a place for them through his death and through his resurrection.

But the disciples don't get it. At this point in the Gospel they cannot see clearly what Jesus is all about.

[8 : 00] Just as many people today. Some even here. Can't quite understand who Jesus is. What it is he has come to do.

And so with these words of verse 6, Jesus kind of spells it out. I am the way he says. I am the truth. I am the life.

What I want to do for a moment tonight is to look at this threefold claim that Jesus makes here in John 14. And the first claim is this.

That Jesus is the way. I am the way says Jesus. What is Jesus saying by that? He is saying here that he alone is the way to God.

That is what Jesus taught. That is what his followers went on to proclaim. Acts 4:12, there is salvation in no one else.

[9 : 02] There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. He retells his disciples in verse 9. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. In verse 6, no one comes to the Father except through me.

And the image here, the idea here is of life as a kind of journey. We are all travelling along a way. That is a self evident truth of human experience, isn't it?

Life doesn't stand still. It moves on. We may try and ignore it. We may try and blot it from our minds. But nonetheless, it is an inescapable fact.

Time moves on and we move on with it. We may like to try and disguise the aging process. Face creams, beauty treatments, hair dye, mascara, Botox, lipstick.

It's just the men. Sorry, Botox. But we know we can't stop the clock, can we?

[10 : 09] We can't hold back the tide of time that relentlessly crashes against the shores of our lives. We may resent it, we may deny it, we may try and disguise it.

But when all is said and done, we cannot escape it. We are all on a journey through this life. And the Bible teaches us that on this journey through life, we've got lost.

We've lost our bearings. We've lost our moral direction. We've lost our sense of purpose and destiny for which we were made. The prophet Isaiah says, all we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way. And Jesus himself, we know from the gospels told stories like the lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost sons to illustrate this very aspect of the human condition.

On our journey through life, human beings are not where they should be in relation to God. And so people drift through life with little sense of purpose or direction.

[11 : 15] We drift through school. We drift to college or university or we drift into a job. We drift in and out of relationships.

And through it all, there is no integrating factor. We drift on, we drift through. But the truth is this, that we will not drift forever.

Because according to Jesus, our lives have a destination. And one day the journey will come to an end and then what? None of us can avoid the reality of death and an appointment with our Creator, the one who made us.

It was Woody Allen who once said, it's not that I'm afraid to die. It's just that I don't want to be there when it happens. Because at the end of the journey, there is an appointment with God.

And that is one appointment we will not fail to keep. It is unavoidable. One day we will have to give an account to the God who made us.

[12 : 21] And that is why our greatest need is to come to know this God, to know the forgiveness of the one before whom we will stand. And that's why Jesus came.

He describes his mission in Luke 19.10 as coming to seek and save that which was lost. So when Jesus says to us, I am the way, he's not claiming to give the best directions to God.

He's not claiming to be our way. He's not claiming to point the way. He's claiming that he himself in his person is the way.

As a story told of a traveller in the Middle East who engaged a guide to take him across some dangerous strip of desert. And when the two men arrived at the edge of the desert, the traveller looking ahead saw before him this vast expanse of trackless sands, whether a single footprint, not a single path, not a single marker.

Turning to his guide, he asked in a tone of surprise, where is the road? With a reproving glance, the guide replied, I am the road.

[13 : 37] And this is what Jesus is saying here. I am the road. I am the way to God. It's through him we come to the Father.

He is the door into the kingdom of God. If you want to come to God, you must come through me, says Jesus. If you want to come to God with all your cares, with all your worries, with all your anxieties, with all your sin, with all your guilt, then you must come through me.

That's the good news tonight. The good news tonight is that the road is built.

Where does that road begin? Where do you get on that road? Remember that story of the man travelling across Ireland, making his way to Dublin.

Stopped and asked an elderly gentleman by the roadside if he could give him directions. And the old man told him, well, if I was going to Dublin, I wouldn't be starting from here.

[14 : 45] Sometimes we think, if I wanted to go to God, I wouldn't be starting from here. And yet here is where it starts for each one of us.

The road is right at your feet this evening. Maybe we're in a place where we know we shouldn't be, maybe we've drifted there, maybe we've strayed into it, maybe we've fallen into it, maybe we've made some foolish choices in our lives.

Maybe we would give anything not to be where we are. But the great thing is this, that exactly from where you are, there is a road that leads to God.

There is a way to God, to His glory, to His love, to His embrace, to His forgiveness, exactly from where you are.

Sometimes we think there cannot possibly be a road to God from where I am, not after the things I've done, not after the mess I've made of my life. But what Jesus is saying to hear, saying to us here is this, I am the way, I am the road.

[15 : 57] From where you are to where God is. And those who come to me will find their journey's end in the very presence of God.

Jesus says I am the way. But he makes another claim here. He says he is the truth. Jesus says I am the truth.

You live in a world that does not believe in truth. It struggles to believe that anything can be true. It may be true for you, but it may not be true for me.

Friends Jesus says here, I am the truth. The Bible teaches us that as human beings we have suppressed the truth about God.

Bible tells us in Romans 1 we've exchanged the truth of God for a lie. We're content to worship created things rather than the one who is our creator.

[17 : 08] Some of you know what it's like when you discover that you've been lied to by someone. You feel betrayed, you feel let down.

And time and time again we discover that we live in a world that betrays us, that lets us down, that lies to us. We think that all manner of created things are going to satisfy us and make us happy. But they never do. It's hard as we try to grab hold of meaning and purpose in the things of this world. They slip through our fingers like grains of sand.

Robert Burns put it like this, pleasures are like poppy spread. You seize the flower, the bloom is shed. Or like the snow falls in the river, a moment white then melts forever.

We try to grab hold of it but it disappears. So what does Jesus mean when he says I am the truth?

[18 : 20] It's a claim to be the truth that alone can satisfy. He is the revelation of the Creator God. If you want to know the truth about God you need to look to Jesus.

Philip says Lord show us the Father, it's enough for us. Jesus says have I been with you so long and you still don't know me Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

And that's picked up elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul speaks of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He says of Jesus he is the image of the invisible God.

God's glory is to be seen in Jesus. How are we to think of God? We're to think of Jesus. What kind of God do we have?

We have one that for our sakes entered our poverty and pain and took our place. We have a God of ridiculous and extravagant love. We have a God who died in our place.

[19 : 19] We have one who knew no sin yet who became sin for us. In a world of lies, in a world that continually betrays us. Jesus Christ is the truth about God and he's not only the truth about God our Creator.

He's also the truth about ourselves as human beings. Because Jesus who was fully divine was also fully human. He was the perfect man. The perfect combination of tenderness and strength, of purity and perfection.

His life is noted and acknowledged not just by Christians but by skeptics and believers alike. It's interesting to read even the followers of other religions and their assessment of the life of Jesus. Jesus almost without exception, they acknowledge his unparalleled goodness. The Irish historian W. E. H. Lecce, no friend of Christianity, wrote this.

The character of Jesus has not only been the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the ample record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.

[20 : 46] You know the word sincere comes from two Latin words that mean without wax. In the ancient world a sculptor who was in a hurry would sometimes use wax in order to more quickly shape a figure.

The warm wax would be added to the stone which could be more easily sculpted into the required shape. The authentic and pure stone statue was known as being sincere without wax.

Jesus' life, Jesus' person is sincere, it was without wax. When you look at Jesus you're looking at a life like no other.

No one ever lived like him. Compare his life with any other religious leader. It is quite simply extraordinary. He's the genuine article.

He's the truth, fully human, fully divine. If you're looking for truth, if you're looking for truth to build your life upon, look no further than the one who said, I am the truth, the truth about God and the truth about ourselves.

[22 : 10] Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth. Thirdly here, Jesus you'll see is the life. Actually that theme of life is a very prominent one in John's Gospel.

John begins his Gospel speaking about Jesus as being the life. He says in verse 4 of chapter 1, in him was life, the life was the light of men.

Later on in the Gospel Jesus says, I've come but they may have life and have it abundantly. The grave of Lazarus, he proclaimed, I am the resurrection and the life.

At the close of his Gospel John writes, now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus claimed to be the bringer of life to human beings dead in sin and transgressions and rebellion against their Creator God.

[23 : 16] In a world characterised by death, Jesus is the life. In John 17 he says, this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

In other words, that eternal life which Jesus brings and indeed embodies is to do with a relationship with God. And according to the New Testament, that life comes to us through Jesus' death on the cross.

It comes through experiencing the forgiveness of God, one for us, by Jesus through his death and resurrection. And that's the incredible thing about the death of Jesus Christ.

It was so different from any other death. So different from the death of other religious leaders.

Moses died at 120, Buddha died at 80, Confucius died at 72, Muhammad died at 62.

Each of them passed away in relative old age, amidst popular acclaim, having spent their lives passing on their teaching to others.

[24 : 31] The future of their movements guaranteed. Christianity is radically different.

Jesus died at the age of around 33. A teaching ministry of barely three years. He was rejected by his own countrymen, betrayed and denied by his own disciples, mocked by his opponents, abandoned and forsaken, so we're told in the New Testament, even by God himself.

His death was by one of the most agonizing forms of execution ever devised by man. He didn't die in old age. He didn't die after a long teaching ministry.

He didn't die amidst popular acclaim. His death was premature, tragic, lonely on a cross, despised and rejected by men. Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And you see the question that arises. How did this man, who ended his life in such utter shame and disgrace, become the most important and influential human being this world has ever known?

[25 : 53] Some of the most famous words Jesus ever spoke reveal the answer to that. We were thinking about it this morning. At that last meal he had with his disciples on the eve of his death.

He took a cup of wine and said, this is my blood, which is the covenant, the blood of the covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus understood that his death had a specific purpose. He wasn't just going to be a martyr. He wasn't just going to be the victim of injustice or some great tragedy.

His death had a very definite purpose. This is my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. We know that it's costly to forgive someone, don't we?

The most common reaction when someone has wronged us or hurt us is that we get angry, we fly off the handle, we lose the rag, we might get into a rage, we become righteously indignant.

[26 : 56] And that kind of reaction creates often a gulf that can last a long, long time. But of course there's another way of dealing with personal hurt or injury.

And that's the way of love. And while love cannot pretend there is no anger and there is no hurt and there is no pain, it does have the amazing capacity to absorb it and to bring reconciliation.

And on the cross, this was the way that God chose to act. This is my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. God is angry and hurt because we have broken his rules.

We have exchanged the truth of God for a lie. We've rejected his moral order. We've abused his standards and yet rather than unleash his anger against us, he has opened the door of reconciliation and forgiveness.

At great cost he's taken that wrath and anger at sin upon himself in Jesus Christ. And that's what we see happening at the death of Jesus.

[27 : 57] And friends, that's why no one else can do. God had to do it himself. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

And that mysterious complexity we call the trinity, God was absorbing into himself all his own anger and hurt that a sinful world had caused him.

Jesus, the life offered himself as a sacrifice so that we might have a life with God. You know, I often meet people who tell me they're not really very sure about God.

If there's a God, there may be a God. Oh, well, yeah, there might be. But I tell you what, they're very sure about it.

And they tell me this. They're not very sure about God. Yeah, there might be. Yeah. But they're very sure of this. If there is a God, then my good life will make me perfectly acceptable to him.

[29 : 08] And they're very sure about that. A good life, they say, that's what matters. I'm living a good life. I'm a moral person.

Being a good person, that's what counts. I don't know if you hear people say that. I hear people say it a lot. What is it?

Imagine a widow who has a son. She raises, she puts through good schools, good university, great personal cost to herself.

She doesn't go holidays. She takes extra jobs, all for her son. She makes great sacrifices. She doesn't have much. But she wants the best for him.

And as she's bringing up her son, she tells him, look son, I want you to live a good life. I want you to tell the truth. I want you to work hard.

[30 : 06] I want you to look out for others. I want you to care for those in need. And after the young man graduates and goes off to his career and to his life, he never speaks to his mother.

He never spends time with her. Well, he may send her a card on her birthday or maybe at Christmas. But he never phones her.

He never writes. He never visits. What if you asked him about his relationship with his mother?

And he responded, well, no. I don't really have anything to do with her personally. But I always tell the truth. I work hard. I care for others.

I'm living a good life. That's all that really matters, isn't it? Would you be satisfied with that answer?

[31 : 09] No, it's not enough for the son to live a good life. To live a good life that his mother wanted without any real relationship with her.

His behavior is inexcusable because she has given him everything. He owes her more than a good life.

He owes her loyalty and devotion and time and affection. There's a God who owe him everything. You owe him more than a decent life. He deserves to be at the center of your life, at the heart of your life.

And friends, that's why Jesus has come. He's come to put God back at the center of your life.

[32 : 12] He's come to bring you forgiveness. He's come to restore a relationship. There's a story.

I think it's from somewhere in Africa of a village in which there was a fire.

There was a village made of straw and mud huts. There was a terrible fire in one of these huts.

There was a family in the hut and the fire took hold so quickly. The family were killed except for there was one little baby boy.

Just as the fire had started, someone had been there and they'd reached in and they'd grabbed this child out of the fire.

[33 : 15] They left the child in the center of the village. After the fire had been put out, the child was discovered and the members of the village were...

We saw this as a great gift of God. This child had been rescued and saved. But they needed to find someone to look after it.

And so people had different bids, if you like, and someone said, well, I have a big family. We'll take them and somebody else said, I've got many cattle and we're rich.

I'm a prince and so forth. Everybody making different competing claims for this child, for the special son, the special boy. And then there was a voice, a commotion at the back of the crowd.

A voice said, I'll look after the boy. I'll look after the boy. And everybody looked around and there was this guy, not very predispossessing, didn't have much cattle.

[34 : 18] It was a nobody, really. And as he came forward, people said, well, where are we at? I said, why should you look after this child? What gives you the right?

And then the man raised his hands, burned, charred, the spigot hands.

Friends, we may have respect for other religious leaders and teachers and so forth. But friends, only Jesus has the scars on his hands.

Only he says, this is my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. No one else can save us. No one else can rescue us. No one else can bring us to God.

Only the one who is the way, the truth and the life. For through that fog of human ignorance and failure and sin, Jesus himself emerges from the road ahead.

[35 : 24] Alone, scars on his hands. He says, I am the way. I am the truth.

I am the life. He says to you tonight, come and follow me. Well, you do that.

Let's pray.

Lord, you know our lives and our hearts and our minds. We confess that we are so often guilty of pursuing our own way, going our own road, taking our own path.

So often we are guilty of believing the lies of this world, swallowing them home. So often we prefer death and separation from you rather than the life, the eternal life that Jesus offers.

[36 : 37] But open our eyes that we might see Jesus, that we might acknowledge him as the way and the truth and the life, and that you would give us grace to put our trust and our confidence in him and to follow him, not just today, but all the days of our lives.

We ask these things in his name and for your glory. Amen. We're going to close our service together by singing from the Scottish Salter in Psalm 40 verses 1 through 5.

I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear length to me. He did incline my voice and cry to hear. We'll stand to sing this together.

I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear length to me.

He did incline my voice and cry to hear. He took me from a fearful bed and crossed the mighty gate.

[38 : 29] And on our own, his death might be establishing my way.

He put a new song in my mouth, our God to magnify.

Many shall see it and shall hear, and on the Lord rely.

O blessed is the land whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting all the ground or such.

As turn aside to rise, O Lord my God, full man he I.

[40 : 02] The wonders of the sun, my gracious thoughts to us were found.

Above all, those are known.

To the earth and the land, and speak of them I would ignore.

None can become heard of. We pray together.

We thank you for bringing us here this evening.

[41 : 33] Lord bless us as we do so, we give thanks to you for all that you have lavished upon us.