

May 13th, 2018

Scripture:

Acts 17:22-31

John 14:1-14

“I am the way --- and the truth --- and the life.”

Today in John 14 we have the 6th of Jesus 7 --- “I am” sayings.

1--- I am the bread of life.

2 --- I am the light of the world.

3 --- I am the gate.

4 --- I am the Good Shepherd ---- we heard a bit about this one a few weeks ago.

5 --- I am the resurrection and the life.

7 ---- I am the true vine.

And then stepping back a number to #6 the focus for today ----- “I am the way the truth and the life”

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

These sayings ---- are hugely significant ----- because they are Jesus is His own words.

I’ve always thought that if you want to know Jesus go to John’s Gospel.

And further --- if you want to know Jesus --- go to the “I am” sayings in John’s Gospel.

And you can’t get much clearer than someone saying I am ---- and then describing themselves.

And not just once ---- but 7 times over.

And that of course is precisely what Jesus does in John's Gospel and John's Gospel only.

I always think of the --- "I am" sayings ---- as Jesus in His own words.

So Jesus in His own words for today ----- "I am the way the truth and the life ----- No one comes to the Father except through me."

Of all the "I am" sayings ----- this is most certainly the one that is the most controversial and difficult for so many people to accept --- especially non-believers.

In particular the idea that no one gets to God without Jesus is troubling for some people.

And yet this is exactly what Jesus says ----- "I am the way the truth and the life ----- No one comes to the Father except through me."

"No one comes to the Father except through me."

I remember a very bright young woman --- coming to me one day maybe 10 years ago or so and saying ---- "I believe in Jesus --- I've read much of the Bible and I think it's true --- but I simply cannot accept that Jesus is the only way to God."

"I believe in Jesus --- I've read much of the Bible and I believe it to be true -- -- but I simply cannot accept that Jesus is the only way to God."

And yet Jesus says ---- "No one comes to the Father except through me."

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

I can tell you that I believe that no one comes to God except through Jesus.

He --- Jesus --- said it ---- and I believe in Him emphatically and totally ---- so it must be true --- or better put ---- Jesus said it so I know that it is true.

Beyond it simply being true because Jesus said it.

Beyond this --- or in addition to this ---- I like to think of it this way.

Yes other teachers --- other books --- other wise people --- may reveal an aspect of God --- or a characteristic of God --- think of Moses --- and Isaiah --- and Jeremiah for example from the Old Testament for example --- they most certainly reveal things to us about God.

But even they are only ever partial --- they --- even when we put them all together --- they only ever reveal part of the character --- and nature --- and beauty --- and goodness ---- and truth of God.

But in Christ we have the totality of God revealed ---- where nothing more is need to see God in all of His radiant --- goodness --- beauty --- and truth.

In the Star wars movie “The Force Awakens” ----- not the latest one --- not “The Last Jedi” ----- but the one before that “The Force Awakens” released in 2015 ---- there is this great scene that I think speaks to John 14 and Jesus saying ---- “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

R2 D2 Luke’s Skywalker’s sidekick droid --- robot ----- has a hologram map that on its own means very little but when placed within the context of the surrounding maps --- a wider all encompassing map ---- leads the resistance to the island where the last Jedi --- Luke Skywalker resides.

Other writers --- prophets --- sages and teachers --- other ways of being ---- at best ---- are like the hologram map that R2 D2 possesses --- partial.

Jesus is like the entire all encompassing map --- where all the parts are contained --- and the road forward opens up.

A map of Whitby will --- well get you around Whitby.

A map of the Durham region will get you around the Durham region.

A map of Ontario will get you around Ontario.

A map of Ontario won’t ever get you to Calgary of Edmonton or Vancouver.

It's not that the map of Ontario is useless if you are in Ontario and want to get to Edmonton --- it's just that it's partial --- it isn't enough --- you need more --- you need another map --- you need other maps --- plural.

Certain books --- may contain parts or pieces of wisdom ----- but they are never enough --- they always leave us needing more.

Not so with God's word --- the scriptures --- and God's living Word Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the entire collections of maps --- Jesus is the entire collection of wisdom ----- better put Jesus is the entire map ---- and further He is the only one who is the entire map --- the entire collection of wisdom.

All others may come close but at some point they are only partial --- and more is need to fill in the gaps and empty spaces.

But not with Jesus.

“No one comes to the Father except through me.” --- doesn't mean all other maps are useless ---- although some are --- as they are simply wrong.

A map of Whitby that has Highway 2 running North to South is useless.

Some maps --- some thinkings --- some teachers --- are useless --- misguided foolish --- many in fact.

Others are only ever partial --- helpful as they may be for one maybe two things --- they lack greatly in others.

Jesus is complete --- and He is the only one who is complete.

The question for me is why waste time with others --- other teachers --- other religions --- other expression of small ---- “t” ---- truth ----- when you can go right to the source --- right to the complete all encompassing total one and readily.

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

Clear --- concise --- to the point --- everything in one place --- instead of misguided and foolish at worst --- or only ever partial at best.

John 14 is Jesus' farewell speech to His disciples.

And we could spend a considerable amount of time talking about the function of farewell speeches in the Jewish tradition and look at the ones we have in the Bible but that's maybe for another day.

John 14 is Jesus' farewell speech ---- the speech he gives before crucifixion - ---resurrection --- and ascension.

And it is a speech of great comfort.

Don't be troubled Jesus says.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled." --- verse 1 opens

You believe in God so believe in me too.

And then he goes on to say --- God has a place for you in His home and I'm going there ahead of you to prepare a place for you.

And not only will I prepare a place for you ---- but once it's all ready I'll come back and get you and take you there myself.

So that you can join me there forever.

You know the way.

That's John 14 --- 1 to 4 in a nutshell.

Don't worry --- just as you believe in God --- believe in me.

God has a place for you --- I'm going there now to get it ready for you --- and once it's ready I'm going to come back take you by the hand and take you to the place I just finished preparing for you.

You know the way there already.

Thomas --- a little uncertain of all of this --- and Thomas ever practical thinks to himself --- well actually I don't know the way --- and so he says this in verse 5 ---- "Lord, we don't know where you are going --- so how can we know the way?"

And here comes the "I am" statement.

In verse 6 Jesus replies --- ""I am the way the truth and the life ----- No one comes to the Father except through me."

And as pre-eminent John scholar Gary Burge rightly notes ---- "Of the three terms --- emphasis surely falls on the first ---- --- "the way."

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Access to God's presence ---- in heaven --- is only through Jesus and no other.

Jesus is the only one who can lead His followers back to the places He prepares for them --- in God's presence.

The first followers of Christ were called people of the way ---- and they were called people of the way for a reason.

They were called people of the way ----- because Jesus was and is the only way to God.

Other ways --- other teachings --- other writings ---- other maps ---- may offer a brief or partial glimpse of God's goodness beauty and truth but then they suddenly end ---- and we are still left wanting more ---- we are still left with a gap a chasm between us and God.

Not so with Jesus.

He is the will and way of God --- He is the way to God ---- the only full way to God --- others may be able to take us part of the way --- Moses --- Jeremiah --- Isaiah are great helps for sure ----- but we still and always need Jesus too ---- that is precisely what He is so clearly saying when He says --- "No one comes to the Father except through me."

He is the way and He is the truth.

And He is the truth precisely because He is the authoritative representative and revealer of God.

He is the authoritative representative and revealer of God.

Jesus reveals God exhaustively unlike anyone else ever can because He has seen God and because He is God.

As John made clear in chapter 1 verse 18 ----“No one has ever seen God --- but the one and only Son ---- who is Himself God.”

“No one has ever seen God --- but the one and only Son --- who is Himself God.”

That is why Jesus can take us to God ---- that is why Jesus is the only one who can take us directly to God --- all the way.

The guy with the map of Whitby and only the map of Whitby might be able to point us in the right direction when we ask how to get to Edmonton providing he already knows Edmonton is to the west and North --- but if he only has the map of Whitby and has never been anywhere else --- he can only help us a teeny wee bit of the way.

Jesus is the one with all the maps --- and He is the only one with all the maps.

Jesus is the one that has already been there --- where it is we desire to go ---- God’s presence forever --- and He is the only one who has already been there.

So who do you want to trust --- someone with one or two of the maps but mostly missing them --- someone who hasn’t actually been where it is you want to get to ----- or the one person who has actually already been where it is you want to get to.

I don’t know about you but I’ll take the guy who’s got all the information --- and not only that I’ll take the guy who is the only one who’s got all the

information --- and not only that I'll take the guy who's been there --- in fact the only guy who's ever been there.

He is the way --- He knows the way ---- indeed He is the very way.

He is the truth --- He is the only one who knows right from wrong ---- truth from untruth --- every single time --- without failure.

And He is the life --- He is the one who can grant life --- life abundant and life eternal.

First we have to start with the recognition that He is the way --- the only way.

It's Jesus or bust when it comes to God.

I remember a friend of mine --- atheist.

Coming to me and another friend one day --- both of us were Christian ---- and he said to us --- the atheist said to us ----- "O.K. so I get it --- I finally accept that God exists."

I quickly replied --- "Good you're half way there --- now you need to know Jesus."

"You're half way there --- now you need to know Jesus."

Probably not the nicest things to say to an atheist who just shared with you that he finally believes in God ----- probably not the reaction he expected.

I hadn't planed on saying that --- indeed I had no idea he was about to say that he finally believed in God --- I thought he was still a long way off from that --- but God suddenly opened up his eyes.

And my response --- instead of "Great ---- or way to go --- or thank goodness" ----- was instead ----- "You're half way there buddy --- now you need to believe in Jesus."

We can't ever truly know God without also Jesus.

Jesus is the revealer of God.

God gave us Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah and so on --- but after ---- Eden --- after Adam and Eve and the fruit and the evil one --- God knew Jesus was necessary for anyone to ever be led back to Him.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” --- verse 3 from John 14 today.

Jesus doesn't just point us to God --- He takes us right to Him --- hand in hand.

He comes along side of us takes us by the hand and walks us right into the presence of God.

Jesus literally goes and finds the lost sheep ---- picks them up and carries them --- takes them back to safety.

That's us we're all the lost sheep right.

You know those pictures of Jesus many of us saw in Sunday school with Jesus carrying the sheep around His neck.

That's us --- we need Jesus to come find us and take us back --- not just point us to but actually take us back into God's presence.

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

It's not just I'll show you the way --- but I am the way.

And it's not just I'll lead you there --- it's I will take you there.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

When I worked at Chapters --- I think I lasted 3 weeks or something before I found a higher paying job --- but the one thing I remember from a month or so at chapters is this --- we were never to just point out where the book was that a customer was looking for --- we were told to never just lead the customer to the book and point at it ---- instead we were told to walk them to

the book --- take the book off the shelf ---- and then pout the book in their hands.

Walk them to the book --- take the book off the shelf ---- and then put the book in their hands.

Put the book in the hands of the customer --- put the book into the hands of the seeker.

Jesus doesn't just point us to God --- or lead us to God --- close to God --- He puts God in our hands or more appropriately He puts us into the very hands of God.

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

Other books ---- other teachers --- other teachings --- other religions ----- may kind of somewhat ---- partially lead us near to God --- part way.

“I'm not really sure you know how to actually get to Edmonton ---- all I really know is Whitby --- but that's North and that's West --- I think if you head that way --- somewhere over there --- you'll likely get there --- eventually --- maybe.”

Would you take directions from that guy?

Or would you take them from the guy who says --- “Edmonton --- oh yeah I've got all the maps you'll need to get there from here --- and you know what I've been there myself -- I've been there before --- in fact I'm the only person between here and there who has ever been there --- and I'll take you there myself ---- right now --- come along we go there together.”

Given the choice ---- who would you travel with?

It's a no brainer.

The one who knows how to get there --- the one who has been there ---- the one who says they will take you there themselves --- the only one who has ever even been there before.

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

That is the very depth of God’s love for us.

He doesn’t just provide the map part of the way --- He doesn’t just provide someone who’s almost been there.

He doesn’t just provide someone who will walk with us part of the way and leave us to figure the rest out ourselves.

He gives us the whole thing in Jesus.

Jesus is the way to God --- Jesus is the only way to God ----- all we have to do is follow Him and He’ll take us there --- right there --- all the way --- he’ll hand us over to God --- one hand to the next.

That’s the beauty --- that’s the depth of God’s love for us.

He doesn’t just point us in the right direction --- Edmonton is over that way somewhere --- North and West.

He takes us there Himself ----- He walks with us --- He walks us right up to the door --- introduces us and then walks inside with us --- all the way there.

Beginning to end --- Alpha and Omega.

All the way my Saviour leads me --- we just sang --- “All the way” --- is the key ----- all the way.

And He is our vision --- what’s your vision people ask --- what’s your vision for your life --- what’s your vision for the church and so on.

He is my vision.

Jesus Christ --- you know ----- Him ----- the way the truth and the life ----- the one ----- and oh yeah --- the only one who leads people all the way to God --- right to God --- He’s my vision ----- vision as in that which I aspire to ----- focus on and look to --- and vision as in that which enables me to see.

God loves us so much that He comes to take us by the hand and walk us back into His presence.

That's what ----- "I am the way the truth and the life ----- No one comes to the Father except through me." ----- means.

God loves us so much that He comes to take us by the hand and walk us back into His presence --- forever.

That's the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for today.

God loves us so much that He comes to take us by the hand and walk us back into His presence forever.

Jesus is the way.

Jesus is the truth.

Jesus is life.

And no one ----- no one --- can lead us right into the very presence of God except Him.

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

Thank you God for Jesus.

Thank you God for coming.

Thank you God for saving us from spinning around in circles endlessly.

Thank you God for Jesus.

Amen.