

Sunday 10th May “I am The Way, The Truth & The Life John 14v1-14

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God^[a]; believe also in me. ²My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And 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. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Jesus the Way to the Father

⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really know me, you will know^[b] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

⁹Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it

This is the part where I talk for 10 minutes and everyone listens, or maybe now with Youtube you can skip me altogether – a novelty that thankfully you can't do to me on a normal Sunday. But I wonder how ready are each of us to hear God speak this morning? How ready are we to change aspects of our lives as a result of God's Word? So I wonder if you are willing, instead of me praying on my own this morning, would you pray with me the prayer that is coming onto your screen, and where we are inviting God to do a new thing in us, especially in this time of lockdown where we should have more time reflect on our lives, so we want to be amazed by what God has for us today. If that's you then let's pray together :

Father, I now invite your Holy Spirit to work in me. I pray that your word today may soak into my life. May my heart be open to hear you say a new thing. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Is it me or are we all becoming very lazy with gadgets around us? The gadget I use the most apart from my phone is the SatNav in the car. And yet it has made me very lazy. I rely more and more on SATNAV to tell me where to go. It's actually stupid, because at times if I just thought for a second or two longer I would work out how to get somewhere. I actually know the way I should go, but I rely upon something else to take me a different route to the same location. Stupid isn't it. And yet there's so many cars now with them. Are we a nation of lost people? Do people really not have any idea where they are going?

Actually in a more profound way, I think the answer is yes. People are lost. People thought they knew where they were going and then Coronavirus hit. Since the lockdown in March people overnight have lost their familiar pattern, they've had to find a new way of living. The things that people's lives were centred on – the 9-5 job, the routine, the socializing, all that stuff is lost. And Government are now talking about how a new way of living will soon become the new norm.

I wonder as we consider all the changes that are taking place at present, and the things that will form the new future, have any of us stopped and

considered the voice that says “I am the way, I’ve always been the way, I am the truth, I always will be truth, and I am the life, I’m not dying I’m alive forever”. The new norm must be centred around Jesus.

The hope that springs up this morning from what Jesus offers is like the refreshing ice-cool water drunk on a warm day. You know what I mean - It brings life again. It’s the good news for all of us that are feeling lost in these days, and whatever the new norm may be as Boris begins to unveil plans later today for the country, our new way has got to be grounded on The Way, The Truth and The Life that only comes from Jesus, and is found in verse 6 of our reading today.

Firstly, he says, **I am the way**

This is where Jesus’ claims are both inclusive and yet exclusive. In claiming that he is the way, then it is open to everyone to receive. No one is turned away. Just look at how many people Jesus spent time with and ate with who the religious folks of his day considered as scum – he never excludes. But to say he is the only way is a statement today which goes against the grain in this pluralistic society – that’s a society where it is accepted that all paths are equally valid.

We claim to be a fully tolerant society accepting peoples’ rights to their own decisions. So where I’m telling people that the only way in life comes from placing Jesus as the centre could be considered by many as rather arrogant, intolerant and narrow minded. But you decide, because we all have the choice – right? Either you see Jesus as a Liar, a Lunatic, a Legend in someone’s made-up mind, or he actually is the Lord. Let’s look at these, because if we don’t then we can’t begin to look to him as the new Way. Someone who deliberately lied about his identity would be a trickster. Someone who falsely believed himself to be God and told others would be a deluded lunatic. The third option, that he never existed, or that his followers misinterpreted and distorted what he said, has no historical basis – history tells us he was no legend. So by exclusion, the

only reasonable conclusion is that he was who he claimed to be - the Lord, and that's a big deal.

Because if he's the Lord, then there's no alternative. So why do so many resort to something else? It's actually quite depressing to think that for many, this world lasts 70-80 years and that's it, that we're just a bunch of chemicals that are continually evolving; that in some way there's no direction to our existence and purpose; that the relationships and love we have built up with family counts for nothing at the end of the day? How awful and depressing, especially with corona deaths being talked about presently every night on the news.

And you see the reason why a lot of people can't see that Jesus is the only way, is because people think they are in control and they know where they are going. But who now can say they are in control after 2 months of lockdown and over 30,000 deaths in the UK? Maybe now is the time when we realise how much we need direction and hope that comes from trusting Jesus for our future direction.

Have these past weeks given you any room to consider whether you are trusting in the right thing? Have you been trusting in those shares, or the promotion in work? It all counts for nothing, and no one is exempt. But Jesus said to come to him anyone who is burdened with life and he would refresh them. Don't tell me that any of us is not without burden at present. In these uncertain times put your trust in him for the way ahead.

THE TRUTH

Secondly Jesus says he's the only truth. In a world that has grown accustomed to the term fake news, where the internet can tell you one thing on a website and then say something different on another, where do we truly find it today? Today's postmodern world says that whatever you believe to be true is acceptable; what might be true to you might not be true to another.

When Jesus stood before Pilate he explained that he had come to testify to the truth, and Pilate sarcastically replied "What is truth?" Pilate misunderstood all that Jesus stood for because in Jesus we see the fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies relating to his existence. This was no haphazard accident. Jesus exists as part of God's plan to restore the world. He is the only truth we can look to for guidance.

I'd suggest if you're looking for truth to stop looking at our phones or our TV screens. But here's a warning, because the truth of the Gospel can be offensive when it doesn't suit what people want to do with their lives. No one wants to be told this is the right path to follow. Today's society is all about exploring whatever you want, and no one is going to tell you different.

I think the reason why we have become the society of our own opinions is because the opposite is a wake-up call when we realise how much of our lives need to change in order to align to God's Word. But if Jesus is the only way, then we've got to live by his truth, not our own.

SO FINALLY, WHAT ABOUT LIFE? The Life that Jesus gives.

When we acknowledge the truth of Jesus that sets us free from the grind of life; once we receive the offer of his love - his undeserved favour and forgiveness, we begin to live our lives with real purpose and meaning.

I love this time of year when the garden which once looked dead, springs into life. In our back garden we have an apple tree which I forgot to prune back last year, and I know it's now too late to do anything to it because the flowers are appearing and next you know it, there'll be apples. Life has sprung into action, and you can see the blossom that comes from it.

Is your life blossoming in the realisation of Jesus being the centre of everything? If I'm honest, after 7 weeks of lockdown I'm worried that our chance to review our lives hasn't happened for many. I'm honestly not springing on any of us that guilt trip, but frankly I'm not having many people enquiring about the weekly online Bible study. Have we used this lockdown into a time to close down the hatches and hibernate? And so honestly in my mind I'm thinking, what is it going to take to waken people into a deep dependence, an appreciation of God's love and grace for us – that he is our only way, he is the truth we rely on for everything, and he has brought us life.

You see the life which Jesus offers is this. It is about you experiencing the fullness of Christ on a regular basis and rejoicing in the grace that He offers. It is about a personal, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ so that you know the depths and heights and length and width of God's love for you. It's not just about seeing a little fruit in your life, or about getting by each day, or about being fed by the rector as he busts his gut for everyone else. This is your time where Jesus wants you to blossom, being saturated with spiritual fruit, that your branches, a bit like what's going to happen with my apple tree as those apples get bigger, are touching the ground under the weight of God's blessings.

A Life that Christ offers is like when you pull the sponge out of the water and it is dripping and running everywhere because it is so full it can't hold any more. Is that how you feel?

You know something, God has been speaking to me in this preparation and making **me** realise that this life that I have with him should transform how I love my family, how I turn away from negativity, how I start loving people who I can't stand, how I devote more time to being in his presence rather than in front of a screen, how I move away from the critical and enter into the encouraging mind of Christ that gives **life**.

Folks, we all have big choices to make throughout our lives, but let's consider why we are being given this time. No one wants this virus any longer, and it's

not from God, but what is God wanting us to do in this space. This time is by far the most important time in your life . And so I'm calling upon you, I'm calling on my own heart to be honest with ourselves, to be honest with God. God never intended that we simply exist – that we move from one day to the next. He says in scripture that doesn't slumber or sleep over us, so why do we? Where's the life? He never intended that you live out your days on this earth in defeat and doubt and worry, but that's exactly what so many are settling for in these times.

Remember this time in your life – it's not going to come around again. Remember this day whether you claim to be a follower of Jesus or you're not. He wants you to follow him, and no other path. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And it will only be through him that the worries of this present time can be placed in perspective. Nothing you search for will ever come close to him, and nothing in life should ever come in the way of him. Know his love for you today. Know his welcome. Know the real life that he offers and be blessed. And why not contact me or any of the pastoral team this week so we can support you in the road ahead.