

I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life

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[0:00] I'll take your Bibles this morning and open them to John chapter 14.

! John chapter 14, and you can find that chapter and I'll read it here in just a moment. But let me begin really with a question. Sometimes it's a good way to begin a sermon.

With a question. And the question that I have is this. What is truth? Simple question.

What is truth? Now, some might say, well, that's a silly question. Silly question because, you know, how do you answer that? What a silly question. Well, it's not a silly question. Very good question. What is truth? Is it an unanswerable question? Some might have that conclusion. Well, not really. In fact, I could say to you, resolutely. There is an answer to that question. And I hope before we're finished this morning that we'll come to the answer to that question. Very clear answer to the question.

[1:22] And so maybe it's an irrelevant question. Maybe for us here today. An irrelevant question. That is the question, what is truth? Well, not at all. It's not an irrelevant question. In fact, I would say to you that it is the question that it is the question of our day. The question, what is truth? Because that question really places us squarely in the center of all that is wrong in our culture today. The question, what truth is? Because you and I know that an alarming number of people in America have come to the wrong answer to the question. They've made the wrong conclusions about it, which I think goes a long way to explaining the moral decline of our culture. And so this must be a new question for mankind to answer, right? No.

Well, it's an old question. And I would also say to you that the answer is even older. In fact, I've had you turn to John 14, and you can stay right there, but let me read something out of John 18.

John 18, verse 37, and the context of the verse is we have Jesus standing before Pilate. He is on trial, so to speak. Pilate, at least he thinks he has the power to release Jesus. And Jesus is going to tell him that you have no power except the power that's been given to you by my Father. But Pilate says this in John 18, 37. He says to Jesus, are you the king? Are you a king then? And Jesus answered, you say rightly that I am a king for this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice. And Pilate said to him this famous question, what is truth? So you say it's not a new question, is it? What is truth? And then the Bible goes on to say, and when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews. What is truth? Now I can't get into the mind, the head of Pilate, understand his thoughts and his motivations for asking that question of Jesus. Jesus brought up the issue of truth, and I don't know what Pilate meant by that. Some have suggested that he was just being kind of flippant about it.

Some have suggested that he was searching, honestly searching. I do not know. But the sad thing is, Pilate did not wait around to get the answer, did he? The Bible says as soon as he asked the question, he went out. He didn't wait around to get the answer from Jesus. And so what is the answer to Pilate's question? Well, perhaps if Pilate had stuck around a little longer, maybe Jesus would have told him. I don't know. I kind of doubted, but maybe he might have. But Jesus did tell us, all right? He did tell us, and he did so with one of those great I am statements that we've been looking at for now a number of weeks. And so now I've had you turn to John chapter 14. Look then, starting with verse 1, and let me read the text. We'll read all the way down to verse 6. Verse 6, of course, being the focal passage for the sermon this morning. And this is a very famous passage, very well known. In fact, if you've been to a Christian funeral, and all of us have been to a number of them, I cannot tell you how many times this passage has been used as the text. In fact, I have used it myself, all right? So it's very familiar, but here's how it goes. Jesus said, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, or since I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know. Verse 5, Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going.

[6:04] And how can we know the way? And Jesus said to him, and here it is, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Now we're going to stop right there.

It's not my intention to expound upon the larger text, but rather to focus on the one verse, verse 6. Now when we're finished, or near the end of it, I am going to bring into play something that Jesus, what Jesus said in those verses that I've just read. Let's focus on verse 6, where Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no, no one. No one comes to the Father but by me, or literally through me. Now listen to me. With that one statement, just that one brief statement, one brief declaration, Jesus pronounced a dead end on all cults and false religions of the world. And at the same time, he declared the only hope for troubled hearts.

That's what we need to get from this. He pronounced a dead end on all the cults, and believe me, our world is full of them, and new ones coming on the scene nearly every day. Because you know, there are many ways to tell a lie. In fact, almost an infinite number of ways to tell a lie.

But when Jesus said, I'm the way, the truth, and the life, he pronounced a dead end on all cults, all false religions of this world. And yet, I don't want you to miss that he also, in a positive sense, because you cannot have a negative without a positive, in the positive sense, Jesus also declared the only hope, the only hope for troubled hearts. That's how he began this dialogue with his disciples.

Let not your heart be troubled. And so let's, this morning, let's just get right into that, and let's just notice what he said here, and kind of pick this apart a little bit. In the first place, as I look at this statement in, in verse 6, I see that Jesus was, in the first place, being very emphatic.

[8:49] You, you, you must see that first. He's being emphatic here. Now, I've covered this ground just a little bit as we, way back when I introduced this series of messages on the I am statements, and so I want to say a little bit more about it, not belabor the point, but to get down into the grammar of what he said, that is the Greek grammar, we understand that Jesus used an emphatic when he spoke, a Greek emphatic. What does that mean? It means he said, literally said, ego, I me, ha, ha, das. I, I, I am. He repeated the personal pronoun twice. That's how we know this is an emphatic. He said, I, I am, the way, the truth, the life. Now, we don't really have a good way in English, in the English language, to make a statement like that. Not, not, not really, not in the proficient way that the Greeks had of saying or making a statement is emphatic, and if we were to take what Jesus said here and really, literally bring it over into the English, it would be very awkward, and it would not be good grammar, actually, but if we were to do that, we might say it this way. Jesus said, I, myself, and no one else am the one and only way. See how many English words it takes to say what Jesus said in just a few words.

I, myself, and no one else am the one and only way. Now, you cannot miss the, the import of that. He is being very emphatic. Now, many today, most today, outside Christian, bonafide Christian churches, most today would disagree with Jesus on that. I mean, they would adamantly disagree with that statement.

They might take issue and do take issue with Jesus in regard to that statement, that very, very emphatic statement. They might even say that Jesus was delusional. In fact, there are many who would maintain that about the Lord, that he was an egomaniac, and so they would take issue with that, but, but yet, putting that aside, there is no doubt as to what Jesus meant. So that's where we need to start. What did he mean? You can take issue with it. Many do. You can say he is an egomaniac, and some do, but there is no doubt as to what he said. He's being emphatic. I am the way. All right, so first, what he said is emphatic. Let's move on from there very quickly and see a second thing. Not only is he is he being emphatic, but he is also being very absolute.

Absolute. He said, I am the way. I am the truth. The life. Is that important?

That we have the word thee repeated each time before the noun. The word thee, of course, grammatically speaking, is an article, a definite article. And yet, in this sense, it is being used as an adjective. Do you know what that means?

[12:38] It means that the word thee is modifying. That's what adjectives do. They modify nouns. They describe or define or identify the noun, something about the noun. And the word thee is used in that sense all three times as it's positioned before the noun. Do you know what that means? Well,

it means something very obvious. It means that Jesus is not a good way.

He's not just the best way that one might choose. He is not one of many ways, as some have concluded in our world today and have since the beginning of time. He's not just one of the good ways.

He is the way. He is the way. I know some of you are thinking, well, pastor, we, we know this. We know this. And yet we need to be reminded of him.

He is the one and only way. It's very absolute. Very absolute. He is the one and only way, the one and only truth, the one and only life.

No one, he said. Listen how how absolute that is. How absolutely dogmatic that is. No one, no one comes to the father but by me.

[14:16] I tell you, to most people in our culture today, that is the height of arrogance. The height of arrogance. They say, no, come on. Come on, that, that, that, how arrogant that is.

How dogmatic and narrow-minded can you get. How intolerant. That, that's the word.

How intolerant. The famous advice columnist known as Dear Abby once wrote these words. She wrote, I, in my view, the height of arrogance is to attempt to show people the, quote, errors in their religion of their choice.

That's what Dear Abby said. Well, I've got news for Dear Abby if she's still alive and I don't know. I never did discover who she was. But I've got news for her.

And all those who would feel the same way. It's not the height of arrogance to show people the errors of their religion. It's the height of love to show them.

[15:31] Because Jesus is the one and only way to heaven. And those who are attempting another way are doomed.

Doomed. As well as those who are attempting no way at all. They're doomed. Because Jesus is the one and only way. Truth, you see, is absolute.

It is absolute. Or, by the way, it is not truth. It's not truth. And truth, like it or not. And many don't like it. Truth is always intolerant of error.

Intolerant of non-truth. That's the nature of truth. I heard a man say that as a schoolboy, he had a teacher who was the most dogmatic, narrow-minded person he had ever met.

No, it's not my kids saying that about their mother, their teacher. Although in this regard, she's dogmatic as well. He said she's just dogmatic.

[16:39] And she insisted that two plus two equals four. And it didn't make any difference. What you had two of didn't make any difference.

If you had two apples or two cows or two horses or two dollars or two candy bars, it didn't make any difference. She always insisted that two plus two equals four. So dogmatic.

You know, I don't know where you do your banking, but I suppose you've discovered that your bank is just as dogmatic about absolute truth.

That they operate on the basis of absolute truth, don't they? I mean with my bank or your bank, two plus two equals four. They are very dogmatic about that.

Only with me, it's two minus two equals zero. And they're just as dogmatic about that. Maybe you've discovered it. You see, that's all in the world we're talking about here.

[17:35] Truth is absolute. Including moral truth. It's absolute or it is not truth. And what is the absolute truth given here by the Lord Jesus Christ, by the way?

Well, he gives us three. In the first place, Jesus said, I am the absolute one and only way. Now, how are we to understand that?

I am the one and only way. Be careful because you might make a mistake here. How can a person be the way?

I mean, we can understand how a person can point to the way. But that's not what Jesus said. We might be able to understand how a person could be an example and illustrate a way.

That his very life is an illustration of the right way. We might understand that, but that is not what Jesus said. Now, Jesus is all of those things. But he said, I am the way.

[18:48] How can a person be a way, the way? John Phillips, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, offers this illustration.

Let me read it to you. He wrote about a pioneer missionary in Africa who told how he took the gospel to a new tribe deep in the bush of Africa.

With his bearers, he arrived at a certain village, but they would not go beyond it. And so the missionary appealed to the local chief, is there someone in this village who could be my guide to the distant northern tribe?

The chief summoned a man who claimed he could. He was tall, battle-scarred, carried a large axe. Well, this missionary set off through the bush following his new guide, and the way became increasingly rough, and the path all but disappeared.

Occasionally, he would see a mark on a tree. Sometimes he would see a narrow path. And finally, the missionary asked the guide if he was sure he knew the way to which his guide responded.

[20:01] White man, he said. You see this axe in my hand? You see these scars on my body? With this axe, I blazed the trail to the tribal village.

I came from there, and these scars I received when I made the way. You asked me if I know the way? Before I came, there was no way. I am the way.

Now, that gets pretty close to illustrating what Jesus meant here. How he could be not just the pointer to the way, or an illustration of the life that is the right way.

That how he could be the way. Because you see, the Lord Jesus Christ came from glory. He came from heaven, and when he made this statement in John chapter 14, he was on his way back.

By way of the cross. And before he came, there was no way. And the scars of Calvary on his body, witness to the price that he paid, in order to blaze that trail for us to reach God, Jesus points to his scars on his hands, and on his side, and to his feet.

[21:20] He points to his scars, and he says, Before I came, there was no way. I am the way. I am the absolute one and only way. Jesus also said, I am the absolute one and only truth.

That is, Jesus is the embodiment of all that is true.

All truth originates from him. And, therefore, all truth points to him.

Let's go back to what Pilate said in John 18 that I quoted a moment ago, read for you a moment ago. Pilate asked the rhetorical question, What is truth?

And it was rhetorical because he really was not expecting an answer. His actions proved that. But he said, What is truth? That is, You have your truth, Jesus.

[22:35] The Jews have their truth. I'm listening to you. I'm listening to them. The Romans have their truth. I'm answerable to them.

So, you have your truth, Jesus. The Jews have their truth. The Romans have their truth. The Greeks have their truth. The Gentiles have their truth. They all have their truth.

What is truth? Translation, there is no absolute truth. I believe that's really what we need to learn. There is no absolute truth.

Why are so many people in our world, specifically in our culture today, so against the belief in any moral absolute truth?

They are, you know. A number of years ago, a philosophy professor asked a group of university students this one question.

[23:40] Was Hitler wrong in what he did to the Jews? And he got a number of answers to the question, a lot of them different answers, some of them appalling answers.

And the most dogmatic answer turned in by these university students was, in my opinion, yes, he was wrong.

That was the most dogmatic answer he got. In my opinion, yes. You find anything wrong with that? Is the truth of a thing validated by one's opinion?

Is the truth of a thing judged on the basis of opinion? Well, someone will invariably say what they meant was, I believe, I believe Hitler was wrong.

Well, maybe that is what they meant. Let me ask you something. Is the truth of a thing judged and validated by what a person believes?

[25:10] That's why I said you need to be careful. We analyze these passages and try to figure out what Jesus meant. You need to be careful. You might make a mistake here.

Let me ask that question again. Think about this long and hard. Maybe not long, because I'm not going to wait for you, but... Is the truth of a thing judged, validated, on the basis of personal belief?

Thank you. I believe Jesus is Lord. They say today, a third of this world's population believes that Allah is Lord.

And that number is growing. I say Jesus, I believe Jesus is Lord. And there are others who believe that Allah is Lord.

Now, the law of absolute truth says both statements can be wrong. But both statements cannot be right.

[26 : 26] Okay? That's just basic logic 101. And why is that? Because truth is based upon, if it is truth, is based upon a fact, on reality.

Not relativism. That is, truth is not based upon what I believe, and maybe your truth is what you believe, and maybe it's relative to what you believe, and you believe, and this guy believes, and my next door neighbor believes, and we all may believe a little something different, and so the truth is what it is to me.

No, it's not relative. Truth is based upon a reality. And truth also is not pragmatic. It's not based on pragmatism.

That is, truth is what works for you. And so if your truth works for you, more power to you, you just live by that truth, and if these folks over here, their truth, different kind of truth, but it works for them, just whatever works for you.

Truth is not pragmatic. It's not based upon relativism. It's not based upon pragmatism. It is based upon, truth is based upon reality. There is a truth.

[27 : 49] One truth. One truth. I was reading the other day something that I think illustrates what I'm talking about here. And it was something written to encourage some young believers, some young followers, and they were to read these words daily.

And these words were to help bolster their faith, to kind of lift them up, and to encourage them, and to give them courage so that they would obey their Lord.

All right? And this is how it went. This is what these believers were to be encouraged by, what they were to read every day. Obey God.

Do not fight amongst yourselves or else you will fail. Be patient, for God is with the patient. Pray during the night and be persistent in asking God to give you victory, control, and conquest.

Remember God frequently. Read the words of the creator of the earth and one that you will meet on the day of judgment. Purify your soul from all unclean things.

[28 : 56] You must remember to make out supplications wherever you go. And any time you do anything, God is with his faithful servants. He will protect them and make their tasks easier and give them success and control and victory.

Does that sound pretty good up to that point? Well, I think it sounds all right. It doesn't. Well, the writer of these encouraging words continues by reminding his faithful disciples that, quote, whoever says there is no God but Allah with all his heart goes to heaven.

Is that the truth? Well, someone might say, well, that's not the way I believe it, but who's to say the Christians have a corner on the truth?

I can't judge, by the way, if a Muslim is sincere about his or her faith and who's to say that God will not bless that Muslim with salvation. Sound like a strange argument?

It's not so strange. Would you make that argument? As long as you're sincere. And yeah, okay, this was written to Muslims and they read this and they think they're serving God.

[30 : 15] They call him Allah and they do believe in one God, by the way, and so do we and so maybe, maybe just the same God. And so they're kind of working out their salvation in their way and we're working out our salvation in our way and we're all serving the same God and if we're just sincere about our faith and devotion to him, then God will honor that and grant salvation.

That's pretty prevalent logic of our day. Well, let me ask you something then. From the words that I just quoted from, now you know, a Muslim writing, do you think those who were the intended readers were sincere about their faith, their faith in Allah?

I tell you they were. Very sincere. Let me read some more of it.

How beautiful it is for one to read God's words, speaking of course about the Quran, such as, and those who prefer the afterlife over this world should fight for the sake of God and these words do not suppose that those who are killed for the sake of God are dead, they are alive.

Then, it closes with these words. When the hour of reality approaches the zero hour, wholeheartedly welcome death for the sake of Allah.

[31 : 57] Always be remembering Allah. Either end your life while praying, seconds before the target or make your last words, there is no God but Allah, Muhammad is his messenger.

Target? Target? What target? Now you probably have guessed that these words were the last minute instructions to a group of terrorists who hijacked four planes on September 11, 2001,

murdering some 3,000 Americans.

Were they sincere about their faith in Allah? Truth. Is truth then relative to one's personal belief? It's not, isn't it? Jesus said, I am the absolute one and only truth.

And then he said, I am the absolute one and only life. That is, God, God the Father, Yahweh God has a monopoly on life.

[33 : 40] Soul ownership of life, true life. There is no life apart from him, apart from Christ. No life. And if you want to live life to the fullest down here, in the nasty now and nows, as one preacher put it, and you want to have and enjoy life in the sweet by and by, the hereafter, the blessed eternal life in heaven, then you must come to Christ.

That's what he means. John 11, 26, we said that or looked at that last week, where Jesus said, whoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

So Jesus is the one and only way, the one and only truth, the one and only life. He's being very emphatic.

I, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And he's being very absolute. I am the absolute one and only way, truth, and life.

And third, Jesus is being very exclusive. Very exclusive here.

[35 : 05] Verse 6 again says, no one comes to the Father except through me. That's pretty exclusive.

Peter said virtually the same thing in Acts 4 12. Nor is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

And what is that name? Of course it's Jesus. Jesus. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 7 14. narrow narrow is the way that leads to life. The kingdom of God is open to a specific group of people.

It's exclusive. It is open only for those who will come to Jesus. Jesus. Just then.

[36 : 23] And with that in mind let me give you one more truth here about this great I am statement. It is very compelling.

Have you thought about this? That what Jesus says here is very compelling. on the face of it the truth Jesus declared here appears negative.

Grammatically speaking it is put in the negative. The truth Jesus declares here appears very narrow therefore appears restrictive.

No one comes to the father but by me. That is without Jesus there is no going.

No going. Because he's the way. Without Jesus there is no knowing. Because he's the truth. without Jesus there is no living.

[37 : 44] Because he is the life. This is the absolute truth stated in the negative. Stated in the negative. No one comes but by me.

But you know you cannot have a negative without a positive. And what Jesus says here amounts to one of the most positive truths anyone could ever hope to hear.

No the longer we live the more we understand that there is trouble in the heart.

Trouble with the heart. Have you discovered that?! I'm convinced that prior to a man or woman coming to faith in Christ the Holy Spirit reveals in the heart that there's trouble there.

There's trouble in the heart. we not only live in troubling times but we have in us troubled hearts.

[39 : 10] Trouble and what Jesus says here he's saying to troubled heart. And we discover that a man will discover that a woman will discover that and that truth is inescapable and we try to escape it.

We come up with all kinds of ways to put that aside to put that out of our minds to maybe somehow compensate it for with a thousand different ways or methods.

We try to fix it in the world's way. We try to cover it up this trouble in the heart or try to explain it away through philosophy or rationalities or differing ways which I just explain that away that it's not true that my heart's fine I'm good I'm okay and all that to no avail there is deep trouble in the heart and what Jesus says here he says by the way to people with troubled hearts his disciples originally and to the world today people with troubled hearts and what he says is extremely compelling perhaps you've not looked at it this way look again starting with verse one

Jesus said let not don't let your heart be troubled and I'll just quote it read it as it's literally written believe God we kind of add some other words in our English but it's strictly believe God believe me in my father's house he said there are many mansions if it were not so I would have told you and I'm

going going to prepare a place for you speaking to his disciples hearts are troubled he assured them of the glory of heaven and many places there for them

Jesus said I'm going there to prepare for you and if I go or since I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am that's there there you may be also great promise great words isn't it aren't they what what what an encouraged encouragement to these guys who have troubled hearts and then what did Thomas say I believe Thomas was the spokesman for many troubled hearts today maybe some right here troubled by many things but primarily troubled by lostness troubled there's sin here hopelessness guilt troubled heart and [43:26] Thomas says Lord we do not know where you're going and how can we know the way isn't that a question the question many have today God is the one who reveals the answer and he alone is the Lord of salvation but the question is asked by many today we don't know the way we only know the desperation of the heart hopelessness of life what's the way is it this way that way these people over here have the way does this religion have the way does this self-help book provide the way this this focus group here this counselor this place of entertainment this focus here is this the way to take care of my troubled heart and people go off scurrying after this way and that way and this way and that way and they're kind of like

Thomas we don't know the way suddenly there's the answer Jesus said I'm the way I'm the way I'm the way you see what he says is very compelling very compelling not because this preacher quoted it but it's because it's the word of God and the Holy Spirit takes that word and applies it to the heart maybe some hearts right here applies the heart and now it's time to respond in faith Jesus is the way he's the way yeah no one can come to the father but by him you can come to the father by him will you come

Thank you.