

The grace that Jesus is the Life

If you are just joining us today, we are on our final Sunday in a three-part exploration of **John 14:6** and the grace that Jesus is *the Way and the Truth and the Life*.

And this morning, I want to shift from the way I've approached this the last two Sundays – each something of a deep dive into the relevance and impact of Jesus being the Way, and Jesus being the Truth. And instead, this morning, I want to conclude this short study by returning to this verse – the whole of it – ***in its original context*** (which we haven't done yet).

But ***we need to*** – to hear this verse – these words of Jesus – within the context of John 14 – because this passage as a whole is strikingly relevant to where often find ourselves... Which will help us hear Jesus' words in John 14:6 as grace that ***we ourselves*** need...

So, before we dive into the text together, ***let's pray*** -----

Now here and there, I'm sure all of us have heard someone say that ***Jesus never claimed to be God***... That this is just something that Christians have imposed on Jesus... Something that we've made up and built up around Jesus...

And there is some reason to think this way – especially since, in the synoptic gospels (the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke), we find Jesus often *avoiding* the claims of his contemporaries, *sidestepping* the

inevitable questions about his identity. Jesus' often didn't seem that eager to announce or reveal His identity...

But in the gospel of John, we are invited into the life of Jesus **from another vantage point**, and here we see – again and again – that Jesus was **not** vague about his identity. In fact, He made **bold** claims – **the boldest claims imaginable** – about Himself. Claims so bold that they ultimately got him killed – crucified...

Claims **so bold** – that **if true** – place Jesus at the very center of all history, all life, all things – the One who alone is worthy of all of our hope, and affection, and trust... **And if false** – claims that should cast him from history... Which obviously hasn't happened...

But these claims – these "I am" statements in John's gospel – aren't just truths Jesus' want us to know and accept – **they are each a revelation of the gospel to us...** An **invitation** into the very heart of the gospel – the incredible goodness of Jesus...

That's what I hope we'll hear today in these well-known words of Jesus in **John 14:6** – where he says, *"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."*

Of all the "I am" statements, I think this has got to be one of the most famous... At least in our day and in these parts...

And yet, it often kind of floats out there on its own – or maybe only in reference to the rest of the verse – "**I am the way and the truth and the life.** *No one comes to the Father except through me.*"

If I'm honest, this saying of Jesus is one I've known for most of my life, and for a while now I've known where to find it even – but beyond that, I didn't have much context for this verse until really studying it just a few years back.

And yet, as I've studied it, I've come to see how much this simple verse really **unpacks** or **opens up** the whole of John 14 for us... A chapter that begins **not** with "*I am the way and the truth and the life*" – but with these poignant words: "**Do not let your hearts be troubled...**"

(**John 14:1**) – "*Do not let your hearts be troubled...*"

Ultimately, **John 14:6** is Jesus' **answer** to his disciples' troubled hearts... **But he doesn't start with the answer.**

He starts by acknowledging their pain, their fear – their *disorientation* – **their troubled hearts.**

Which is one of the reasons why **WE** need to hear **John 14:6** in it's context – because I think we also, often, find ourselves in this place. Some of us are **right now** – with **troubled hearts** – for many different reasons...

This experience, this reality, probably feels pretty real for many of us – and many around us...

But before we unearth the stuff of **OUR** hearts, we need to sort out why Jesus' **first** disciples were troubled...

And it's not that hard to discover... If we glance back just one chapter, we discover that John 14 comes **right after** Jesus has shared **the Last Supper** with his disciples – a Passover feast they would never forget.

A Passover feast that would have **stirred** in them incredible hope and expectation – *as the Passover always did.*

This feast that told the story of how God – YAHWEH – Israel's God – the God over All – had, centuries before, stepped out of the heavens and acted on their behalf – rescuing them from slavery to the Egyptians – claiming them as His own – and binding them to Himself and they to Him...

This was a story – a feast that reminded them that God – their God – was not indifferent to their pain and the pain of the world...

A story – a feast – that would renew their hope that God still saw and cared for them in their suffering – and that He would come again to rescue them...

And as crazy as it seemed, over the last while, Jesus' disciples had come to see **Him** as God's answer – the One who would rescue them.

And yet, by the end of this symbolic, inspiring, encouraging, holy meal with Jesus, the disciples found themselves **gutted** – **their hearts troubled**... because of a number of things that Jesus had revealed – **announced** – in the midst of the feast...

First of all, there was the announcement – during the meal – that one of them would betray Jesus...

John 13:21, Jesus says, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."

That alone would have **cut** all of them **to the heart**...

To know that *one of them* – one of their band of brothers – with whom they had shared so much – one of Jesus' closest companions – would betray Jesus in the coming hours...

They probably **all** felt betrayed... *Wouldn't you? Honestly?*

And then, moments later, after Judas had slipped away from the meal into the night, Jesus announced that He would be with them for only a little while longer.

John 13:33 – "My children, I will be with you only a little longer... *Where I am going, you cannot come*..."

Again - and all the moreso - their hearts, their heads - must have spun... sunk... **Imagine?**

How could this be?

How would they continue on without Jesus...?

It didn't make any sense to them...

Honestly, it might have felt like something of a betrayal...

"Jesus, how could you leave us? How could you leave us now?"

And then, (as if all that wasn't enough), after Peter's bold vow that he would stick close to Jesus and even lay down his life for Jesus, Jesus announced that Peter himself – the natural leader among them – would **deny Jesus three times** – before the night was out...

No wonder the disciples were troubled!

The last few years had **all** been leading toward **this moment**.
It felt like the momentum was just **growing**.

And NOW?!... Now it felt like everything was shifting, falling apart, being turned upside-down!?

And Jesus still had **great expectations** of them... That they would continue on with the things they had learned from him... That they would continue proclaiming and revealing the gospel to the watching world...

But now ***without him...***

No wonder their hearts were troubled...

But then in **John 14:1**, knowing all this – knowing what was stirring and spinning inside his disciples – Jesus says to them – these words that seem so impossible – "**Don't let your hearts be troubled...**"

Which is *an interesting thing* for Jesus to say, since we're told that even He experienced a troubled heart in the face of it all. Just a few verses back – in **John 13:21** – when he revealed that one of them would betray him, we're told **that "Jesus was troubled in spirit..."**

Jesus was...

Which tells us that we don't need to be ashamed of having a troubled heart at times. **It is to be expected.** And not just for those who don't know Christ, but for Christians too.

In a way, it's a sign of health to be able to feel **brokenness** for what it is... **Jesus did!** To ache for and over what is not the way it's supposed to be – in the world, in others, and in ourselves...

Jesus Himself was troubled in spirit...

And yet, in **John 14**, Jesus invites the disciples **to find comfort** and hope for their troubled hearts...

And, as he always does, he explains **why... why** they can... why their hearts don't **need** to be troubled... why His leaving would actually become their great comfort and joy...

Because – as Jesus famously says – *"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life..."*

Listen to the whole of what he says – **John 14:1-6...**

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. *You believe in God; believe also in me. My 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? 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. You know the way to the place I am going."*

(v.5) Thomas said to him, *"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"*

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

Let's stop here and linger on the basic question – **Where is Jesus going?**

We tend to think "heaven", don't we? But that's not what Jesus says. He says He's going **to the Father**. *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me..."*

Which, if we were to read the rest of John's gospel, we'd discover, **is heaven to Jesus**.

In truth, in John's gospel, we're invited to see that the whole of Jesus' life is lived *in the Father* – in the will and love and leading of the Father – for the glory of the Father...

According to Jesus, heaven is nothing less than the realm where the Father is fully known and adored and in charge...

Where all is as the Father wants it and intends it...

And this, according to Jesus, **is everything**.

Which helps us understand Jesus' prayer in **John 17:3** – "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent..."

In other words, **eternal life** is not an unending life in a far off place, but an unending and abounding life **in the Father**.

And because Jesus goes to the Father – through the cross – Jesus' disciples, and you and I with them, can **go** to the Father... can **come** to the Father... can **know** the Father – Jesus' Father – as **our Father**...

This is what Jesus is saying...

This is why Jesus' going away did not need to crush their souls – to trouble their hearts – because Jesus' going away meant and means that **we can come home – to the Father**...

And not just to the Father's house after we die, but to the Father Himself – through Jesus – today...

That's what we learn here – that **Jesus is the Way** – not just **at the end**, but now.

He is the Way **to the Father** – while we're **on the way**...

Which is the heart of the gospel, isn't it?

That in His death, Jesus died for us – that He took our sin – the sin is our rebellion against the Father – the sin that keeps us separated from God, cut off, alienated from our hearts true home.

And Jesus bore it on the cross for us – so that now **through Him** – we can *come home...* We can come home **to the Father...** We can know the Father as **our Father...**

Which is no abstract, irrelevant concept, is it?

This is a truth that holds me every day – through all that life brings. I come back to this all the time...

I'll never forget feeling the deep gift of this a few years back – during **a very difficult season** in my journey – as I sat on my front steps one day in the midst of it all... wondering where my life was going... wondering how the pieces could work together... Tempted to fear... to fear that I was simply adrift... lost in the shuffle... forgotten... the maker of my own destiny – and going nowhere...

But there on those steps that day – and through that season, what held me was exactly this – **the gospel** – that, because of Christ, I'm not adrift. I'm not lost. I'm not an orphan. Because of the gospel, Jesus' Father is **my Father...** Because Jesus is the Way – I am home already – in the embrace and care of my Father – through Jesus...

Ok, but wait: Can we trust the Father? Can you? Can I?

Do I really **want** the Father to be **my** Father? Do we?

Would we **want** to be under His care?

Oh, Yes...! Without a doubt: **Yes!**

Why? How can I say that? How can I know that...?

Because of what Jesus says in **John 14:6** – "I am the Way **and the Truth...**"

The truth of **what?** The truth of **the Father!** The truth of **God!**

In referring to Himself as the Truth, Jesus is not just talking about some **abstract** truth. He is telling us that He Himself is the Truth – the true revelation **of the Father...**

Listen to His words... **John 14:6f**

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know the Father as well. From now on, **you do know him and have seen him.**"*
Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus 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'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and 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.** Believe 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..."

Do you hear what Jesus is saying?

He's saying that every word that comes from His lips is a revelation of the Father... Every action, every invitation, every self-revelation is a revelation of the Father...

And not just through his words and works, **but through the cross.** In His going away – to the horror of the cross – Jesus is revealing **the Father** to us – like nothing else ever could...

the **glory** of God... the **justice** of God... the **love** of God...

As the apostle Paul says in **Romans 5:8** – "*God demonstrates (reveals, puts on display) his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us.*" At the cross – in the sacrificial death of Jesus for sinners like me and you – the Father's holy love is put on display... made known... revealed... ***like nothing else ever could...***

Again, this is no ***abstract, irrelevant concept***, is it? This knowledge of God revealed in Christ – in His life and ministry, but above all, in His death – is an anchor to our hearts and minds and souls as we walk through the trials and travails of our lives.

It is for me... As I know it is for many of us...

I remember a few years back, walking through that harrowing season I alluded to a moment ago. And it wasn't just bewildering for me, but for us as a family – as we sought to pick ourselves up after a painful journey and conclusion with a church.

And now I was done, out of work and hurting, trying to heal and figure out where God would take us next...

And again and again, people of all stripes (Christians and otherwise), would say to Janet or I, "Oh, I'm sure it just means that something even better is around the corner waiting for you..."

And, every time someone said this, I just smiled – wishing it was true – **and yet thankful** – **thankful** that I have something better than **karma**... or wishful-thinking...

I've been through enough and I've walked alongside others through enough to know that life doesn't **always** just turn around and get better and easier and quickly...

No, **life can be full of crosses.**

Bruce Milne, longtime pastor of First Baptist in Vancouver, once wrote,

"Life at times does not appear to make discernable sense; the vastness of the universe oppresses us, the seemingly impersonal cycle of nature evidences no master plan, and the story of humanity rolls on generation after generation with little apparent meaning at the heart of it all. In our personal lives unexpected happenings break in unbidden, sometimes cruelly, and we find ourselves lisping the verdict of Macbeth, 'Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' In such moods we cry out from our 'troubled hearts' for some word from beyond to reassure us that there is a meaning; that a heart of love still beats behind the cold indifference and arbitrariness of things."

And, in the grace of God, **word has come** – word from beyond. And that Word is **Jesus**... And **because Jesus is the Truth**, we know that **there is** – that there is a heart of Love at the center of the universe... In the grace of God, because Jesus is the Truth, **we who follow Christ can know** that we walk through our trials and travails in the sovereign care of a God who is not indifferent or unaffected,

cold, callous, or cruel... but who is *utterly and perfectly loving and just and good and gracious...*

Because Jesus is the face and revelation of God to us...

And ***above all***, we know this because Jesus has gone away – **to the cross** – for us, and for all...

He has done something about the sin and pain and brokenness of the world – done something that will ultimately put an end to the sin, pain and brokenness – and that something is that He has sacrificed Himself for us... Because Jesus is the Truth – we know that God can be trusted in and through it all...

All this because ***Jesus is the Way... and the Truth...***

And the Life...

Oh, I'm so thankful that Jesus doesn't just conclude with saying He is ***the Truth...***

Because in the end, ***it's not enough...***

In the end, ***we can't do it.*** In the end, we can't do what Jesus has called us to do and be... We can't follow His Way... We can't love like He loves... We can't forgive like He forgives... We can't trust and obey the Father like He does...

Not without his Life alive in us...

And in His grace, in the grace of the gospel, in His going away to the Father – through the cross – this is exactly what Jesus gives to us.

Listen to what Jesus says in **John 14:16f**

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you..."

This is the grace of the gospel. In the grace of God, because **Jesus is the Life**, we don't have to go it alone, or do it alone. But Jesus, by the Spirit, now comes to live in us – and us in Him...

I love how John's gospel helps us see how much this is the reality of Jesus' life. Of everything He said, and everything He did... That every moment of His life was lived in the empowering intimacy of the Father, by the Spirit... He didn't have to do it alone.

And in the grace of the gospel, **neither do we**. Through Jesus, who is the Way and the Truth, we are drawn into **the very life of God** – the empowering intimacy of the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

An embrace sufficient for all that life brings us... An embrace that is itself Life – the Life we were created for...

And not just as something we can hope for *after we die*, but, like Jesus, as our everyday life today – and forever...

John 14:5-6

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

**So, come. Come to Me.
Come through Me - to the Father – and live...**

Is your heart troubled with fear that you are lost in the cosmos -
adrift and alone - cut off from God – with no hope?

Jesus says: **Come. Come to Me.**

I am the Way – the Way home to the Father's embrace...

Or is your heart troubled with fear – fear **of God Himself** – fear
and uncertainty that God can be trusted with the world and with you –
your life, your needs, your future...?

Again, Jesus says: **Come. Come to Me. For I am the Truth
of the Father... Look to Me – and to my cross – and know the
Father... that the Father is more loving, and just, gracious and
good, and faithful and trustworthy than you could ever
imagine...**

Or is your heart troubled with what feels like the impossible
expectation and demands of following Jesus? Is your heart troubled
with fear that you don't have what it takes...?

Jesus says: **Come. Come to Me. For I am the Life – and
because I live, you also will live – in Me...**

Let's pray...