

10:00 a.m.

Teaching #1743 - Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church

JESUS CHRIST, THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE - THE CENTRAL CHRISTIAN MESSAGE BY WHICH WE HAVE BEEN JUDGED INTOLERANT BY THE WORLD

John 14:1-14 - "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. [4] And you know the way to where I am going." [5] Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" [6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [7] If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." [8] Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." [9] Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? [10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. [11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. [12] "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. [13] Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

"Troubled" - "**Let not your hearts be troubled...**" That the disciples' hearts were considerably *troubled* would be a colossal understatement. Remember, originally there were no chapter and verse divisions in John's document. These words from Jesus weren't the *first* verse in a brand new *chapter* as they appear in our New Testaments. And that fact has considerable impact in considering these very familiar words from our Lord.

The impact of our text varies greatly when read like this: **John 13:36-14:3** - "Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." [37] Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." [38] Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.... 14:1...." **Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."**

The situation into which Jesus spoke was overloaded with trouble for the disciples. Jesus had just told them He was leaving them. He explained that He was going to be executed. He had just revealed one of them was a traitor. And He had just informed Peter he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. This had not been a good evening.

And it is on the heels of the news about Judas' betrayal and Peter's horrible failure that they hear Jesus reminding them of His promise and faithfulness. It's as though Jesus reminds them no, they can't put their trust in other followers (Judas), and no, they can't put much stock in their own spiritual muscle and potential (Peter), but they *can* count on Jesus' sure plan for their eternal welfare and blessing. You can't rely on *others* and you can't rely on *self*, but you absolutely can rely confidently on *Jesus, the Christ*. Their Lord has *eternal plans* and He confirms and safe-guards their *reservations* in the "*place*" He has prepared for them.

1) **AS FAR AS WE HAVE RECORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT NOTHING IN JESUS' EARTHLY MISSION WAS DONE FOR HIMSELF**

I know we all *know* this. What we want to do now is not just *know* it, but *think about it*.

John 14:1-3 - "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

Jesus already knows something His disciples don't. He knows they will soon see Him ascend into heaven. And He'll ascend *alone*. They won't see Jesus *taking* anybody to heaven with Him. That Jesus is doing all of this *for* them will be something they will have to cling to *in faith* when they don't *see* Him physically anymore.

So when Jesus calls His followers to "*believe also in me*"(1), He isn't asking them to believe He *exists*. They already know that. He's calling them to *trust in the whole purpose of His life*. Everything Jesus did He did for *others* rather than *Himself*.

John takes us all back into the meaning of Jesus' *coming* into this world. We studied these words - **John 1:14, 16-17** - "**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth....[16]....For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. [17] For the law was given through**

Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Jesus had no **other** reason to take on human flesh, says John, than to carry in His precious person **grace and truth** for a lost, dark, and undeserving world. People like Peter and that flawed little band of disciples were some of the first **products** of Jesus' first coming. They were already the **results** of Jesus' mission.

So when Jesus calls them to **believe in Him** in our text He's telling them to call to their discouraged minds that **nothing has changed**. Jesus is still in mission. His going to the Father isn't for **Himself**. His going to the Father is still for **them**. Just as surely as He **came** for them He is **leaving** for them. His work on their behalf isn't **finished**. His **redeeming** work, as He Himself proclaimed, was "**finished**" on the cross. But Jesus is **still busy**. He is still involved in a momentous **preparing** work. He is making ready **a place** for His own.

We are all so inclined to put a **period** in the story after the Ascension when there is only a continuing **sentence**. Our creation-restoring Lord hasn't gone for coffee. And He most surely hasn't **forgotten** His full mission on our behalf. He's preparing. He's interceding. And that means, whether you stop to consider it or not, there isn't a single day **God the Son isn't thinking about you and preparing a place for you**. Jesus is still **busy** on your behalf. He continues His work.

The comforting logic of all this is what these first disciples - and all of us who follow - need to ponder and treasure. The **historically visible** work of Jesus in the Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension lays the groundwork for confidence in the **present invisible** work of Christ in preparing a place and coming again. It is all part of the great **one complete work** of our Savior. He's telling His disciples He has far too much invested in this work to **leave any part of it undone**. All of this is packed into those words - "**Believe in Me!**"

2) **THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE ARE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTIES OF CHRIST'S PERSON**

Let me explain what I mean:

John 14:4-7 - "**And you know the way to where I am going.**" [5] Thomas said to him, "**Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?**" [6] Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me. [7] **If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.**"

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"(6). If it weren't for Thomas expressing his deep personal doubts we would never have these universally known words.

We've all felt the frustration of being **told** we know something we don't think we know. Thomas just can't let his frustration sit silent when Jesus says, "**You know the way to where I am going**"(4). To which Thomas replies, "**We don't even know where you're going. Let alone the way there!**"(5).

And there - right there - Jesus takes one of the greatest teaching opportunities in the history of the church - "**Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me**"(6).

Thomas will never understand what Jesus' Person and work are all about if he looks for the **way** or the **truth** or the **life** as abstractions - things that can be **given** - by Christ or anyone else. True, there are religions and philosophies that can teach about a **way** of living. And true, there are **prophets and teachers** who can present and dialogue on lessons of **truth**. And true, there are discussions-a-plenty, along with advertisers and talk-show hosts, luring the masses along their pathway to **life** at its richest.

None of this is even close to the meaning of our Lord's words to Thomas. Jesus doesn't **tell** us about a way. He Himself **is** the way. The way is tied up in His very Person. When Jesus said He was the way He meant what the writer of Hebrews meant in **Hebrews 10:19-20** - "**Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh...**"

The **way** isn't something Jesus **dispenses** like a vending machine gives out chocolate bars. The way is **in and through Jesus' flesh**. This is what makes Jesus' claim as the way so exclusive. Christian doctrine doesn't mean Jesus was smarter or a better teacher. Christians aren't just claiming Jesus was **right** and all the other religious leaders **wrong**. This misses the point entirely.

Christian doctrine claims Jesus is exclusively the **way** - and the **only** way - because the **way is tied up in the very flesh of His**

body. As the writer of Hebrews says, access to Father God is opened, **“by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh....”** The way is exclusive for the rather obvious reason that no one else has the **very flesh of Jesus Christ offered up for our sins.**

The same reasoning holds for Jesus’ claim to be the **truth.** By this Jesus didn’t intend to imply merely that He wasn’t **lying** in what He said. He didn’t say He **spoke** the truth. He said He **was** the truth. He was the **exact embodiment of the true God.** His very existence meant no one had the truth about the Creator God unless he or she knew Jesus Christ.

Of course, people could know about the **existence** of God simply by honestly reflecting on the created world around them - **Romans 1:19-20 - “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”**

And people could know about the **moral nature** of God by the inward witness of their own conscience - **Romans 2:15 - “They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.”**

But the truth of God’s redeeming love and grace and His loving reach to fallen mankind and His plan to redeem and restore all of creation - **that truth** cannot possibly be grasped apart from His reliable revelation in Jesus Christ, God the Son.

Jesus also told Thomas He was **the life.** Here too, He didn’t mean he could **explain** how to have a good life. And He didn’t mean - Oprah style - that He could un-tap the **best inward life principle** that was in Thomas. In a meaning far more profound He was telling Thomas - and all others - Thomas was locked into **spiritual death** without Christ’s divinely imparted life. Jesus was declaring what John first stated so magnificently in the first chapter of His gospel - **John 1:4 - “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”**

The church lesson here is all of these blessings must constantly remain **attached to the Person of Christ.** I would challenge us with the rather radical idea that there is not one single blessing - from our salvation to our future glorification - that can be **taken from Christ as a benefit.** Everything comes wrapped up with the Person of Christ Himself. No one can take forgiveness from Jesus and run from His Lordship. As John will make clear later, there are no blessings whatsoever apart from **abiding in our Lord.**

3) **IF ONLY PHILIP COULD SEE GOD, HE WOULD BE SATISFIED**

John 14:8-11 - “Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” [9] Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? [10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. [11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.”

Philip expresses the universal longing of humankind. He carries in his heart the desire to **see** a God who remains **invisible.** If only God could be brought down to the level of his **senses** the desire of his heart would be fulfilled. Philip wants to see **God** as clearly as he can see **Jesus.**

And Jesus **is** Father God’s answer to Philip’s desire - **“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”**(9). Let that sink in. People have **seen** God. They have **seen** God - the Creator of the universe - with their physical eyes. We’re not guessing anymore. As surely as Philip could perceive **Jesus** with his own physical senses he could perceive **Father God** with his physical senses.

But there’s more in our text - **John 14:10 - “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”**

So we aren’t Philip. He may have seen Jesus, but we haven’t. But we have the **words** of Jesus faithfully recorded in Gospel accounts. We’ve been studying them every Sunday morning for over a year. Did you know you were reading the **words of Father God.** The God you can’t see has **written words to you.**

What would you do if God texted you? This is what you have, according to Jesus Christ. He said He didn’t speak words willy-nilly to His followers. Father God spoke and is speaking in the recorded words of Jesus. We are hearing **God** when we engage

seriously with the written words of our Lord.

Note also His **words** are reinforced by His **works** - John 14:11 - **"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."** Water into wine, Officer's son healed at a great distance - Lame man healed and walking - Multiplied loaves and fish - Walking on water - Blind man receiving sight - Lazarus raised from the grave. It's quite an impressive list. Divine credentials granted.

4) JESUS' WORKS, OUR WORKS, AND ANSWERED PRAYER

John 14:12-14 - **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. [13] Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."**

It is striking to me that Jesus mentions the greatness of **our** works right on the heels of mentioning **His**. What could be greater than raising someone from the dead? How could our works possibly be greater? We feel presumptuous even considering it.

But think about this. After three whole years Jesus never got far beyond Palestine. After three whole years He had, as far as we know, eleven disciples sharing His last meal with Him. There were about 120 gathered at the pre-Pentecost prayer meeting. That's a smaller crowd than many church youth groups.

But after Jesus' ascension fisherman Peter preaches one sermon and three thousand are saved and added to the church. And within one generation the newly birthed church will reach the entire Mediterranean world.

So how shall we account for the **quantitatively greater works**? Are we just better at it than Jesus? We all know better. Our text says we will do greater works **precisely because Jesus is gone back to the Father** - John 14:12 - **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."**

But how does Jesus' physical absence result in greater works? That's where those oft quoted (misinterpreted?) verses about prayer come into the picture - John 14:13-14 - **"Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."**

"Asking in Jesus' name" means **asking in Jesus' cause**. These are verses about ordinary people carrying out the mission of the church **armed with nothing but expectant prayer**. These are verses about people so extending their mission in message and power that **Father God is glorified in the exalting of the Son throughout the world**. These are **missionary prayers and missionary answers**.

Expect great things when you take the name of Jesus into this dark world. God will do whatever the church needs to be glorified through the exaltation of Jesus Christ - the way, the truth, and the life.