

The Way, the Truth and the Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 September 2025

Preacher: Nick McQuaker

[0 : 00] Thank you for reading the scriptures for us. Do keep your Bibles open, or keep your phone open at the Bible app! as we look at John's Gospel together, and particularly we're going to be focusing on chapter 14!

Why are Christians so devoted to Jesus? Why do Christians long for opportunities to tell other people about Jesus, friends, even complete strangers?

Why do they want to take part in a nationwide Gospel mission to tell more people about Jesus? Maybe you've been dragged along by a Christian friend, and they're keen for you to come and to hear about Jesus.

Why? Well, a great way to answer those questions is to look at the seven wonderful sayings of Jesus that we find in John's Gospel that are called the I Am sayings, where Jesus says things like, I am the light of the world, I am the good shepherd, I am the bread of life.

We can't look at all seven this morning, but we're going to focus in on one of those great sayings, arguably the greatest of these sayings, and arguably the most controversial of these sayings, where Jesus says, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

[1 : 40] The declaration itself comes in in verse 6, but I want us to get the context, so let's work our way towards it from verse 1. And our passage begins with comforting words for troubled disciples.

Jesus is eating a final meal with his closest followers before his arrest, trial, and execution. So in just a few hours, he's going to be arrested.

There's going to be a trial with the Jewish court overnight. The next day, he'll be on trial before the Roman governor, Pilate, he'll be condemned to death. He'll be nailed to a cross. The next day, he'll be dead.

And his disciples are deeply troubled. I hope you've enjoyed many relaxed evenings out in your life, going out for a meal with family, with friends.

Well, this is no relaxed evening out. The atmosphere is heavy, with the distressing and confusing impact of Jesus' words.

[2 : 42] He's talked about one of them betraying him, and then of leaving them, and saying they cannot go where he is going. So where is he going?

Why is he going? Why can't they go with him? He says they will follow later, and his most loyal follower, Peter, the passionate, devoted Peter has protested, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Will you really? Will you really? Says Jesus.

No, you won't, Peter. Three times you are going to disown me. What words to create a sense of foreboding. What terrible events could cause Peter to disown Jesus?

So no wonder they're deeply troubled. And Jesus speaks words of comfort to his troubled disciples. And he begins by saying, do not let your hearts be troubled.

[3 : 48] Christian, maybe you've come this morning with a troubled heart. And actually the words that your Lord wants you to hear this morning, are simply those words, do not let your hearts be troubled.

But Jesus says that, but he then follows on with a remarkable call to faith. He says, believe, or we could simply translate it trust, trust in God, trust also in me.

That's how we can let our hearts not be troubled. It's by trusting in God, trusting in Jesus. But what makes this so remarkable, it's not so much that he tells them to calm their fears by trusting in God.

That's sort of common enough in the Bible. What is remarkable is that he calls them in the very same breath to put their trust in him. Trust in God, trust also in me.

The implication is inescapable that he is somehow making himself equal with God. But he doesn't call them to an ignorant faith, a blind trust.

[4 : 58] He gives them reasons to trust with three wonderful revelations about the ultimate future. So no, he doesn't try to calm their fears simply by saying, don't worry, it's going to be okay.

By sort of playing down the pains and sorrows that lie ahead. Sometimes life is very troublesome, it's very painful, it's very sorrowful. Instead, he directs their minds way beyond the troubles that lie ahead for them in this world.

And he speaks in verses 2 and 3 about the heaven to come and the eternal age beyond this world. And he reveals three great realities about heaven. The first, according to verse 2, and please don't miss the beauty of this, he says that heaven is his father's house.

Heaven is not a sort of a vague, unimaginable place it is for us, for Jesus. It's not vague and unimaginable.

[6 : 09] Now, for some of us, we've just sort of seen far too many pre-ulaphalite paintings with chubby cherubs playing harps and floating on clouds, and that's just a ridiculous image of heaven. But for Jesus, it's his home.

It's the home from which he's come and to which he is returning. Home is the place, heaven is the place where he has enjoyed intimate, eternal relationship with his father.

Heaven is his father's house. And then he says, second, that heaven has room for all who will believe in Jesus. So the point of verse 2 lies really in the word many, that in his father's house are many rooms.

Room for all the disciples, not just for this small group he's eating with, but room for all who will believe in Jesus from every people, tribe, and nation. And then third, and here is the very heart of the Christian message, that our place in heaven is prepared by his going.

So in verse 2 he says, he must go to prepare a place in his father's house for his disciples. That doesn't mean he's going to get the place ready.

[7 : 24] My wife's parents used to live quite near us in Haberysheath, but they then moved down to Cornwall to be near my wife's sister. And they were buying a bungalow and it needed a lot of work doing.

They couldn't live there for six months because there was building work to be done and the place had to be prepared. And then when the building work was finished, then there was the electrics to do and the plumbing and the plastering and then the decorating and then the carpets had to go down and then it had to be furnished and all those things had to be done to prepare the place for them to live there.

Is that what Jesus has to go and do? Well, that is a bit ridiculous really, isn't it? All eternity to prepare the place and it's not ready?

No, no, no. It's his act of going which is essential if there is to be a place for us in his father's house. Our Bible translation here says I'm going there to prepare a place for you. Other translations, perhaps more accurately, simply say I go to prepare a place for you.

[8 : 41] I go. And in John's Gospel, it's his act of going which is a big deal because his going is via the cross. His going entails his sin-bearing death followed by his triumphant resurrection and ascension to the father.

It is going to the cross to pay for our sins that prepares a place for us. Because we can't enter the father's house carrying the guilt and the defilement of our sins, of our many offenses against God, the things that provoke his anger, his holy, just anger.

We can't... Now, I think this will make sense to you. We can't barge our way into the father's house as enemies of God. We can only enter his house as friends, reconciled, forgiven, through the work of Jesus on the cross.

So that's the third and greatest revelation in these verses that our place in heaven is prepared by his going to the cross. Two great reassurances naturally follow.

First, he promises to take us there to be with him. You see that in verse 3. Let's look at that. He says, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

[10 : 14] If he's willing to go to the cross for us, we can certainly trust him to come back and take us home, to be with him. He would hardly endure the cross for us and then fail to take us home.

And then secondly, he says, you know the way to the place where I'm going, in verse 4. And we'll see in a moment that Jesus is saying we know the way, or his disciples know the way, because they know him.

And what a reassurance that is. That to know him is to know the way. So these are comforting words for troubled disciples.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Heaven is his father's house. Heaven has room for all who will believe in him. Our place in heaven is prepared by his going. He promises to take us there to be with him.

And if we know Jesus, we know the way. That then is the context for controversial words in answer to a troubling question. Verses 5 and 6.

[11:18] You see, straightforward, down to earth, Thomas doesn't get it. I don't know whether you attend a Bible study group in the church here, but Thomas would be great to have in your Bible study group because he would be quite happy to say to the leader, we don't know what you're talking about.

I haven't got a clue. All this talk of the father's house has left him confused. See what he says in verse 5?

Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? Now, beyond Thomas' immediate concern, it is a troubling question, isn't it?

How can we know the way? If we don't even know the destination, how can we know the way? I actually left home on Monday evening and I've been sort of slowly making my way up the country and I am so thankful for Google Maps.

And I have had my phone out numerous times. But I found the way to get here. How? Because every time I put in the destination. And then Google tells me the way because I can put in the destination.

[12:33] But what if you don't even know the destination? How can you possibly find the way if you don't know the destination? And maybe this is the question that actually haunts you.

It's the troubling question that keeps you awake at night or gnaws away at you when you're not distracted by other things. What is the destination?

Well, what is life all about? In connection with the mission coming up next year, we've done some national polling as a passion for life. And do you know what we found? We found that one in three people said that what is missing from their lives is purpose.

But one in three people said they don't really know what their lives are for. What's the purpose?

What's the destination? Where should I be trying to get to? And if I can't even answer those questions about the destination, then how can I possibly know the way?

So it's a great question, isn't it? It's a vital question, but it's also a troubling question. How can we know the way? And how thankful we should be here today for Thomas for asking the question because it draws forth from Jesus this great I am saying, which consists of a sensational affirmation followed by a clarifying, an important clarifying negation.

[14:01] So this most sensational affirmation, I am the way and the truth and the life. So let's focus on the first part of that and then I'll say a little bit about the second and third part.

I am the way. Not simply, let me explain the way. Not even let me point the way.

Not even let me show you the way. You know, I talked about my parents-in-law moving down to Cornwall and when they were moving in, my wife traveled down there as a sort of surprise visit and to help them move in and she had to change trains in Plymouth and she got talking to somebody and she missed her train.

Can't possibly imagine that happening but somehow it happened. Talking to somebody, misses her train, she's in a panic. How is she going to get to her destination? And she goes to the ticket office and the lady in the ticket office is so kind to her because she doesn't just tell her where the next train is and which platform.

She leaves her ticket office and she shows my wife the way. Takes her, leads her to the platform.

But Jesus is saying more than, he's not just saying I'll show you the way.

[15:15] No, he says I am the way. I am the way. The way to where? Well, the way to the Father. Not simply to the Father's house in the far off the future but the way to the Father in the present as the end of verse 6 will make clear for us.

Jesus speaks of coming, present tense, to the Father. In fact, of course, again, I think this will make sense to you.

We cannot expect to go to the Father's house then if we do not come to the Father now. We can't expect to live our whole lives estranged from the Father, distant from the Father, hostile even to the

Father, pushing him away and then suddenly, somehow, be welcomed into his house at the end. Then we need to come to the Father now. The destination that matters now and matters most is not a place but a relationship.

We need a way to the Father, to knowing the God who created us and to knowing him as our Father. and we are lost until we find that way.

[16:31] And Jesus says, I am the way. And what good news that is. Let me just explain why I think it's good news.

First, because it means the way is knowable and not impossible to find. because Jesus has come to us and you can meet Jesus this very morning in the pages of Scripture.

Secondly, it's good news because the way is a person for us to trust. Not a philosophy for us to get our heads around.

Now, some of us are great at getting our heads around big ideas. Some of us just don't get our heads around big ideas. But the way is not a philosophy you've got to get hold of. No, it's a person to trust and we can all trust a person.

Even the children who've gone out to their groups can trust a person. They can trust Jesus and so they can know the way. And then thirdly, the way is a provision that is made for us and it's not a performance that is demanded of us.

[17:43] So I guess that some of you in this room have just started uni. How did you get to uni? How did you secure your place? You had to perform.

You can't get into university without performing, getting the grades. It's pretty fair to say that Europe is going to win the Ryder Cup. How?

By their performance. And that's what religion is. religion is a performance that is demanded of us. But the way to the Father is not any form of religion. It's not a way for us to walk. It's not a list of rules for us to follow. It's not a set of meditation techniques for us to master.

we are relieved of all such crushing burdens. Because the way is a person. The way is a person that we can know and love and trust.

[18:48] And when we simply know and trust Jesus, he becomes our way to the Father. remember what he said earlier?

Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. That's all he's calling us to do, to trust in him. And as we trust in him, he becomes the way for us.

But how can he possibly be qualified to make such a claim? What qualifies Jesus to be the way? Well, it's a matter both of who he is and what he has done.

So we've already thought about what he has done to be the way. Going to the cross, taking away our sin so that nothing should stand between us and the Father. Becoming the way to the Father through his death.

But it's not only what he's done, it's also who he is. He is the way because in his very being he is one with the Father. Did you pick that up from the reading?

[19:54] That he is in the closest possible relationship with the Father. So in answer to Philip's request, Lord, show us the Father, Jesus says, don't you get it, Philip?

I am in the Father and the Father is in me and whoever has seen me has seen the Father. In other words, Jesus is the fullest possible revelation of God.

But you might ask, how can we see the Father since Jesus is not visibly present to us as he was for his disciples? Well, the answer lies in the second half of verse 10. That's why we read that far in our reading.

He says, 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. Do you see the emphasis on his words?

And that when Jesus speaks, it is the Father working. It is the Father working to make himself known through the Son. It is the Father speaking to us through the Son, revealing himself to us through the Son.

[21:07] And so Jesus' words are what matters. You see, I can't know you simply by looking at you, can I? I could just sort of stand here for half an hour just looking at you and really at the end of that not feel I know you any better.

But if after service we have a conversation and you use words and you speak to me and tell me about yourself, then I will begin to feel I'm beginning to know you. And if I want to know you, I need to listen to what you say.

And Jesus' words paint the clearest, fullest, most understandable revelation and portrait of the Father that we could have. And so we see the Father by listening to the Son.

And so he's fully qualified to be the way. And there are two essential aspects that first he makes God known to us by his work of revelation and second he clears the way for us to know God by his work of redemption.

That's paying the price to set us free from our sins by dying for us on the cross. In other words, he both makes God known and makes God knowable. And then he simply expands further on those two aspects of his being the way in the rest of this stupendous declaration as he goes on to say, I am the truth.

[22 : 31] Again, he does not merely speak the truth, he embodies the truth. Though all the truth of God resides in Jesus and is communicated to us through him. And so as the way to the Father, he shares with us the knowledge of God.

And we're not left in ignorance, left blindly trusting a God we do not know. No, we come to know the truth concerning God by knowing Jesus and listening to his word.

If you want to know the truth, you have to know Jesus. That's the bottom line. And then he says, I am the life.

So as the way to the Father, he shares with us not only the knowledge of God, but amazingly, he shares with us the life of God. So John's gospel, this testimony to Jesus, John, who walked the roads of Israel with Jesus, listened to Jesus, saw Jesus, touched Jesus, wrote his testimony to the life of Jesus and all that he said and did for us.

John's gospel is full of the promise of eternal life. But how does Jesus give us eternal life? Not merely by pointing the way to life, not simply by telling us where to find life, but by giving himself.

[23 : 58] And he both gives himself for us and he gives himself to us. First, he gives himself for us on the cross, taking our place under the wrath of God, bearing the penalty for our sins so that penalty of death should be lifted from us and then he gives himself to us by giving us his spirit.

so the life that is in him should flow in us, he says, like living waters. So as the truth, he's able to take away the darkness of our minds and give us understanding and as the life, he's able to take away the deadness of our souls and give us life.

And then he says to us, I am the way and the truth and the life. And we can come to the Father through him. And as we come to the Father through him, we receive both the truth of God and the life of God.

That's a most stupendous affirmation, isn't it? In answer to a troubling question. Something to pause and marvel at.

But Jesus immediately adds a clarifying negation. He says, no one comes to the Father except through me.

[25 : 22] This negation brings great clarity. It clarifies that Jesus is not just a way, that he is the way.

because he says, no one comes to the Father except through me. No special cases, no exemption, no one comes to the Father except through me.

You come to the Father through Jesus or you do not come at all. And it's this negation that makes the word such a controversial answer to the troubling question, how can we know the way?

And I just imagine that Graham, your pastor, is invited to some civic event in Edinburgh city centre with community leaders from many different faiths and he's asked to say a few words about his faith and so he begins to read these words of Jesus.

Maybe there are murmurs of admiration as he reads, I am the way, the truth, and the life. What stirring words from the lips of Jesus but then he goes on and he completes the reading, no one comes to the Father except through me.

[26 : 49] An awkward silence follows because no one can fail to recognise the challenge of the negative. those few words are a challenge to all of the world's religions, to all of their teachings, to all of their techniques, to all of their rules, their stories, the words of their gurus and prophets and it's saying that none of them will bring anyone to God.

that's what they claim they will do but they won't. Jesus is saying no one comes to the Father by them. That in fact by pointing people away from Jesus, by saying, claiming there are other ways, that far from bringing people to God, they must inevitably lead people away from God, away from the truth, away from life.

There are many paths away from God but only one way to God and his name is Jesus. And this negative is the challenge that we face as we think about bearing witness to the Lord Jesus. Because we might be delighted to talk about Jesus being a way, but we're fearful of talking about Jesus being the way, of urging people to come to Jesus because there's no other way. Our friends might be interested as we talk about Jesus being a way, about truth and life being found in Jesus, but when we tell them there's no other way, well that's when the conversation can get heated, or at least we anticipate, we fear it will get heated, so maybe we never start the conversation in the first place.

[28 : 46] We fear the pushback. So first we need to overcome our fear of controversy by trusting in God.

But we also need to feel for ourselves the forceful weight of this negative. And I know for my own part that this negative challenges both my reluctance to tell people the good news of the Lord Jesus and my complacency about their urgent and vital need to hear this news.

There is no room for complacency. My neighbours who do not know Jesus, they really do not know the way. And they can't come to the Father if they don't know the way.

And they really are lost. And they really are ignorant to the truth. And they are truly perishing in their sins without life. And they will die in their sins if they do not come to the Father through Jesus.

And the same goes for every single person we meet who does not know Jesus. They do not know the way. They cannot know the way if they don't know him. and I might be the only Christian they know who can tell them about him.

[30 : 15] And I'm not trying to give you a guilt trip. I'm just trying to help all of us in this room, myself included, just to feel the weight of that and not be complacent.

And I need to ask the Father to help me. And I need to rely on the Spirit that Jesus has given me. And I need to overcome my reluctance and my complacency and I need to tell them about Jesus the Son.

Because I know the way and they don't. Just imagine that my wife had gone to that person who worked in the ticket office at Plymouth Station and says, what's the way for me to get where I'm going?

And she said, well I know but I'm not going to tell you. I know the way and they don't. Do I have enough love to tell them the way to the Father?

Where to find truth and life? The good news of the Lord Jesus is the good news of the way to God. The God who created all things, the God who gave us life and breath and all that we have, is the good news of the way to God through Jesus the Son.

[31 : 28] It's the way to life, it's the way to the truth, it's the way home. And through all of our everyday evangelism and through a passion for life we want to encourage each other and we want to help each other and urge each other to declare this good news to those to those that God puts in our lives.

But he is the way, he is the truth, he is the life. That's why we are devoted to Jesus, that's why we need to tell other people about him.

Amen.