

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

He said, "I Am"

John 14:1-6

February 25, 2018

It's good to be with you today on this 2nd Sunday of Lent.

GPS TO AND FROM WEST VIRGINIA.

There are a lot of differing and competing voices and directions for life, especially today in a society that is so polarizing. The debate on guns, on immigration, on corruption in politics. Do you ever think to yourself, "I wish for a time when we can all be together in one thought and goal"? I can think back to the 1980 Winter Olympics when the United States Olympic hockey team defeated the Soviet Union team in Lake Placid. We came together for that. We've come together in tragedy as well: when space shuttle Challenger exploded or 9/11 or the flooding in Texas last year. Wow, it seems like it is easier to site the moments of unity in times of trouble than in good times.

When there is so much noise, so much debate, so many differing opinions, it can get very confusing about which way to go, what is the truth, what is life all about. We need a guide, an expert, one that knows and can lead the way through the twists and turns of life.

During Lent, we are looking at some incredible things Jesus said of Himself with a series entitled, "He Said, 'I Am.'" So turn to page 5 in your bulletin.

Last week, we set the stage. We dug deep into what each of these statements have in common; two Greek words: *ego eimi*.¹ We translate them, "I Am," two simple words, but ones that mean so much more. Jesus says literally, "I I Am" with *ego eimi*, which is the Greek equivalent to Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God. Jesus is saying, "I am God" by saying *ego eimi*. And we will see this in today's Scripture from John 14:1-6.

Let me set the scene: it is the night before Jesus was crucified. He was in the Upper Room with His disciples. Jesus got up from the table and wrapped a towel around his waist. He then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, then dried them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. They enjoyed a meal together, in which He had instituted a new covenant. From Matthew 26:

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."²

Jesus predicted that Judas would betray him and then that Peter would deny Him. He taught the disciples some final lessons before His arrest, trial, flogging, judgment, and execution. And because He knew that all these things would take place, He was certain and deliberate in what He did and said. There was no fluff or silliness or casual conversation here; He had a limited time left, and He made the most of it.

So He said these things to His disciples in John 14:1-6:

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and

¹ εγω ειμι

² Matthew 26:26-28 (NRSV)

get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.” “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”³

For many years now, there has been a great deal of controversy over this Scripture. We have actually had a couple of members leave this church because of this passage. Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

So many people cannot tolerate those words. They say:

- I believe in God but don’t go to church. I don’t have too; I believe my way.
- I’m a good person; that’s all that’s really needed.
- I grew up in the church; that should stand for something.

I mean, how can Jesus say this? There are approximately 4,200 world religions and among those there are the main 5 ones: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. How can Jesus say, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” That’s too restricting. It doesn’t really matter who you worship; it’s all the same God!

Well folks, let’s be honest here: you’ve got 2 choices on how you handle Jesus’ statement. He is either the craziest person ever to live, to believe – He’s dying, remember – that He is the only way to heaven. Either the craziest person ever to live, and you might as well just stop coming to church and stop believing this Christianity stuff because He is crazy, or He is telling the truth, and He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one, not you, not me, not Billy Graham, gets to heaven except through Him.

But here is the kicker. He said, “*ego eimi*.” I Am. I am God, and I say I’m it! No one else; no thing else; no other religion or Savior or holy man. I Am God, and *ego eimi* the way, the truth, and the life.

Let’s look at these three statements.

First, Christ is the Way.

We live in a world of many cultures. But not just around the world; right here in America. Our world, our country is filled with so many different religions and the one thing all religions share in common is this: they all believe their way is the only way.

There are also many who will say all religions today are valid. They say all paths lead to heaven. No matter what road you walk, you will get there.

I have wondered lately what Jesus would say to a Muslim. But reading this passage, I can tell you. He would say the same thing to a Muslim as He would say to a Baptist, a Catholic, a Buddhist or to an unbelieving Jew. Here is what He did say. I am the way to heaven. Jesus did not say:

- I will show you the way to heaven
- find your own way to heaven
- just trust your heart to get to heaven
- look inside yourself for the answer to heaven
- the way to heaven is whatever you want it to be.

³ John 14:1-6 (NLT)

There is a popularism that there is some sort of yellow brick road that we all will travel on and eventually end up in the land of Oz finding our own enlightenment. This is one of the great untruths of this age.

Jesus said, "I am the way..." I, God, am the way. Notice Jesus didn't say, "I might be the way ... I point the way ... I teach the way ... I'm looking for the way." He said, "I'm it!" Then He said, "I'm the Truth."

That's our second point.

Christ is the truth.

The truth is a tricky thing. We all think we have it. We all think our opinion is the one that's right. But we're talking about something here that is bigger than that, something that matters more. Let me explain it this way.

Someone says, "I like to buy my groceries at Save-A-Lot." You ask them why. "I like to save a lot."

Someone else say, "I like to buy my groceries at Fresh Market." So you ask them why. They say, "Because they're my neighborhood grocery store."

Someone else says, "I like to buy my groceries at Kroger." You ask them why. They say, "Because shopping is a pleasure."

When we lived in Fairfield, people would go to Jungle Jims. You ask them why. They say, "Because shopping there is exotic."

But at the end of the day, it just doesn't really matter. After all, it's your opinion, and it's just groceries.

But now were talking about salvation. Now we're talking about heaven, the place where we'd like to spend all of eternity. And we better make sure we have made the right choice.

For some reason, when it comes to trusting the Lord, we are a bit like the man who fell over a cliff and caught himself on a branch about halfway down. He looked up, he looked down but he could see no one. He looked up again. Still no one. So at the top of his voice, he yelled, "Is anyone there?" and got no answer. So he yelled again, "Is anyone there?" Still no answer.

So he yelled a third time even louder, and he heard a voice say, "I am here," and he looked up and said, "Who are you?" The voice said, "I'm the Lord." The man said, "Oh, Lord, help me."

So the Lord said, "Do you trust me?" The man said, "Yes, Lord, I trust you."

Then the Lord said, "Okay, let go of the branch."

The man looked down and saw a drop of several hundred feet, looked back up and said, "Is anyone else up there I could talk to?"

We're a lot like that when the entire time God is saying, "Don't be troubled, believe in Me, just trust Me. Don't look around at anything else. Focus on me. Trust me. I have the truth; in fact, I am the truth."

Instead, people wonder if there is any truth. And if there is, maybe each of the world religions have a piece of the truth. One of the things that I have discovered is that all the major religions point to truth. Buddhism says truth is found through an eight fold path and if you strive all your life, you may eventually discover the truth. But Buddha at the end of his life in a famous statement said, "I'm still searching for the truth."

The Hindu scripture says truth is very illusive and you'll probably never find it. It's like a butterfly and just about the time you grab it, it'll fly off.

Others say truth must be searched for by purifying yourself with chanting and maybe you just might get to the truth.

Mohammed said, "I'm a prophet and I point toward the truth."

Then Jesus comes along and He says, "I am the Truth." Not, "I point to it... I teach it..." "But "I am the Truth." He's either who He says He is or He's crazy. He said, "I, God, am the Truth."

Finally, Christ is the life.

HEALTH COACHING. SHE THINKS SHE KNOWS HOW I CAN HAVE LIFE.

I'm here to tell you that I've already found life: life in Christ.

Jesus had a lot to say about life.

John 3:16:

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."⁴

John 5:24:

"I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life."⁵

Romans 6:11:

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."⁶

As the truth, Jesus is the guide of our way; as the life, He is the end of it. He is the true and living way; there is truth and life in the way, as well as at the end of it. He is the true way to life, the only true way; other ways may seem right, but the end of them is the way of death.

Folks, if you want to know how to get to a particular place, the best person to ask is someone who lives there. Jesus knows every street in heaven; He built them; prepared every home there. He created it. He knows the place inside out. So He is very qualified to give directions.

Jesus said, "*ego eimi* the way, *ego eimi* the truth, *ego eimi* the life." He makes what must've been a startling statement to the people of that day and even more surprising to people 2000 years later; that Jesus would have the audacity to say I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one gets to heaven unless she or he goes through me. Saying that Jesus is the only way seems narrow minded, but it's just the truth.

I don't think there could be a more appropriate passage of Scripture the Sunday following the death of Billy Graham than this one. Is it one you will believe today?

⁴ John 3:16 (NLT)

⁵ John 5:24 (NLT)

⁶ Romans 6:11 (NRSV)