Jesus – The Way, Truth and Life

1. Introduction

a. As we enter into a new year we often take time to consider priorities and goals for the coming year. I think we all know that this coming year is not going to be easy. As the cost of living soars, the world becomes more and more unstable and the clouds of financial crash loom it would be very easy to just give up and give in to despair and gloom.

b. The disciples faced similar feelings as their world seemed about to collapse around them. In John 13 Jesus tells them what is to come. On the last night before His betrayal and death, Jesus was preparing His disciples for the days ahead. For over three years, these men had been following Jesus and learning from His teaching and example. They had placed their hopes in Him as the Messiah, the promised deliverer, yet they still didn't understand how he was going to accomplish that deliverance.

John 13:33 *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'*

c. This prompted Peter to ask where He was going.

John 13:36 *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 afterwards." [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 cock will not crow till you have denied me three times.*

d. Peter and the others did not understand that Jesus was speaking of His death and ascension to heaven. When Jesus responded, Peter was still misunderstanding and declared that he would follow Jesus anywhere and even lay down His life if necessary. Jesus sees their confusion and fear and his response sets the scene for the whole of John 14-17.

John 14:1 *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."*

e. I believe this is what the Lord would say to us as we go into 2024. In the same way that Jesus' death had to come to open up the way into eternal life so, too, the events unfolding in our world are prophesied and necessary to prepare the way for the coming of our King.

f. Jesus patiently continued to teach His disciples, He began speaking more plainly about the place He was going to prepare for them.

John 14:2–5 *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?"*

g. Speaking for the others, Thomas said they did not know where He was going, so how could they know how to follow Him there? It was in answer to this question that Jesus uttered the next of the seven "I am" statements.

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."*

h. So as we go into this new year, as we hear Jesus tell us not to be troubled, let us look at what it means to know him as the way, the truth and the life.

2. The way, the truth, the life

a. The first thing to notice is that, once again, Jesus used the definite article to distinguish Himself as the only way, the only truth and the only life.

i **The way.** A way is a path or route, and the disciples had expressed their confusion about where He was going and how they could follow. As he had told them from the beginning, Jesus was again telling them (and us) "follow me." There is no other path to eternal life, no other way to the Father. Peter reiterated this same truth years later to the rulers in Jerusalem.

Acts 4:12 *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

The exclusive nature of the only path to salvation is expressed in the words "I am the way."

ii **The truth.** Again Jesus used the definite article to emphasize Himself as "the only truth." Psalm 119:142 says, *"Your law is the truth."* In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminded His listeners of several points of the Law, then said, *"But I say unto you . . ."* (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44), thereby equating Himself with the Law of God as the authoritative standard of righteousness. In fact, Jesus said that He came to fulfil the Law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17). Jesus, as the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1) is the source of all truth.

iii **The life.** Jesus had just been telling His disciples about His impending death, and now He was claiming to be the source of all life. Back in John 10 we saw Jesus declare that He was going to lay down His life for His sheep, and then take it back again. He spoke of His authority over life and death as being granted to Him by the Father. In John 14:19, he gives the promise that *"because I live, you also will live."* The deliverance he was about to provide was not a political or social deliverance (which most of the Jews were seeking), but a true deliverance from a life of bondage to sin and death, to a life of freedom in eternity.

3. Overcoming turmoil of soul

a. In John 14:1–11, Jesus shows us how he and the Father team up to overcome our unholy turmoil of soul and give strength and peace to carry on and he does this by calling us to trust Jesus and the Father, to enter into the way, the truth and the life.

b. So first notice that verse 1 and verse 11 — the first and last verses in the text — make the main point.

John 14:1 *Let not your hearts be troubled. <u>Believe</u> in God; believe also in me*

John 14:11 *<u>Believe</u> me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.*

c. This is the opposite of our hearts being troubled. Believing and trusting Jesus for who he really is, and trusting God, are included in each other. Trust Jesus, and in trusting him, trust God. He had just told them at the Last Supper that he was going away (John 13:36). He had told them that they could not go with him. And he had told Peter he was going to deny Jesus before the night is over (John 13:38). In other words, he's leaving them and they're not even

able to make it through the night without him. This is ample reason for all of them at the table to be troubled.

d. The rest of this text (verses 2–10) is support for that exhortation. Why should they — and why should we — not be troubled? Why should we trust him in a situation like this? Or in our unique situation?

4. My Father has many rooms in his house.

a. God's house is large, it has many rooms and he won't run out of space. Even better, there is a place for each one of us. The argument for trust is based on three things:

   i First, this is God's house, not his hotel. His children live with him in his house.

   ii Second, it is very spacious so that he never runs out of room.

   iii Third, there is a room designed for each of the eleven, even Peter. And that means even us, if we trust him.

b. So Peter, and all us other fragile saints who follow Jesus so imperfectly, shouldn't let unholy turmoil rise in our heart. We trust Jesus and trust God. We will have a place in his house — indeed in his household as his child.

John 1:12 *To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the children of God.*

c. Jesus is leaving and they can't go with him immediately. They will be scattered that night when they strike the shepherd, and he will do this work alone. But they mustn't let their sorrow or fear or shame produce an unholy turmoil in their soul. There will be a place for them in his Father's house, as his Father's children forever.

d. This is also true for us – there is a glorious family home ahead for those who put their trust in Jesus and the Father. A place that Jesus has gone ahead to prepare. What does that mean? Does it mean that things in heaven are in disrepair? Does it mean that the sweetness of fellowship with God is a defective thing and in need of improvement? Does it mean that Jesus can say in Matthew 25:34, "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,"* but that he can't say, "the rooms have been prepared from the foundation of the world"?

e. I don't think so. The house of God is not in disrepair. The sweetness of fellowship with God does not need improvement. And this dwelling near the heart of God has been in one sense designed and suitable for redeemed sinners from before the creation of the world. But there are two senses in which things are not yet ready as Jesus speaks.

5. I go to prepare the way

a. One of these senses is this: What is not yet ready — not yet prepared — is the way to get your room in God's presence. Sin has not been atoned for. And Jesus is the Lamb of God about to be slain (John 1:29, 36). The wrath of God, the condemnation, the curse of God, is still unsatisfied, and Jesus is about to become a curse for us (Galatians 3:13) and bear our condemnation (Romans 8:3) and endure the bruising of the Father (Isaiah 53:10). Death is yet to be defeated and Jesus is about to give his life and take it back again from the jaws of death (John 10:18). Every obstacle between us and our room in the Father's house is about to be removed in the next three days.

b. In other words, he is preparing the way there and he is that way. Through entering into the truth of his death and resurrection so we enter into the way to the rooms that have been prepared. He goes to prepare a place for us and as he goes he becomes the way that we get there. He is the truth that we hold onto to get there and he is the life, the eternal life that we will enjoy when we get there. When he says he goes to prepare a place for us, he means he is opening the way. He becomes the way. He confirms and becomes the truth. He purchases the life and is that life.

c. In other words, Peter and the other disciples, and you and I, do not need to have an unholy turmoil of soul that we are imperfect, wrath-deserving, unworthy followers of Jesus. Our sin does not mean that our place in God's household will be unavailable, or unsuitable. Because Jesus, this night, goes to purchase our forgiveness and become the way to the Father. He makes our room not only available, but suitable and certain for his redeemed sheep.

6. I will take you to myself

a. But that is not all he means when he says "I go to prepare a place for you."

John 14:3 *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*

b. I think this is one of the most important phrases in this passage: *I will take you to myself*. This shifts the focus from a place to a person. Where Jesus is, there is heaven. In the presence of Jesus, we find our home, our rest and he goes ahead making our promised eternal presence with him a reality.

c. The phrase, "*I go to prepare a place for you*" comes directly from the Jewish wedding customs. After the betrothal had taken place the groom returns to his father's house to go and build a bridal chamber on his father's house to bring her to for the second part of the wedding known as the consummation. When would he be back? No one knew but his father who had to inspect the chamber and once it met his specifications, he would release his son to go get his bride.

d. Jesus has gone ahead as our forerunner and has prepared the way – now it will be the Father's decision as to when the consummation will take place.

Heb. 6:19-20 *We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, [20] where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

Matt.24:36 *But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*

e. "*No one knows the day or the hour, only the father*" was the idiom that Jewish people in Jesus' day would understand to be talking about the time when the bridegroom would go to kidnap his bride. While the bridegroom was away, the bride spent the time sewing her wedding garments and preparing to be a wife. So, in the same way, Jesus is making it clear that he is preparing a way and we are called to walk in the truth and life that he gives us as we wait for the time of his return when he will take us to be with him.

f. We shouldn't use this passage of Scripture to show that when Jesus comes back at the second coming he will take us to heaven. It does not say that. It says, "*I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*" And where will he be when he

comes? We will meet him in the air, and he will establish his reign on the earth. And so we will forever be with the Lord.

1 Thess. 4:16–17 *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* [17] *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will <u>always be with the Lord</u>.*

g. What this text focuses on in the second coming is not a return to heaven but a reunion with Christ. "*I will come again and will take you to myself*." Therefore, as his beloved disciples, we will not let our hearts be troubled. We trust him that he is coming for us and will take us to be with him. We trust him because the dwelling he has prepared for us is his crucified, risen, and glorified self. Don't be troubled, he will come and take us to himself.

7. The Father is with us now

a. In v.7–11 Jesus says virtually the same thing six times., that he and the Father are so profoundly one, that his presence is the presence of God the Father.

i Verse 7a: "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also."

ii Verse 7b: "From now on you do know him and have seen him."

iii Verse 9a in response to Philip's request to see the Father: "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?'"

iv Verse 9b: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

v Verse 10a: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?"

vi Verse 11a: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me."

b. Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father and Jesus makes it crystal clear. If we know him, we also know the Father. But you may respond to Jesus, *"But you went away. You were there. And when you were there God was there. The Father was there in you. But now you're gone."* Which brings us to one last argument for why our hearts should not be troubled.

8. I will be with you always, not just at my return

a. How can that be? He has left. He is in heaven with the Father interceding for us at God's right hand. To see this argument, we need to drop down five verses after our text — to verses 16–18.

John 14:16-18 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever,* [17] *even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.* [18] *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

b. When the Helper, the Holy Spirit, came, Jesus came. When it says at the end of verse 17, *"he dwells with you, and will be in you,"* he means, I am with you now physically and I will be in you spiritually — when the Spirit comes. This is why Paul talks the way he does about the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ, and Christ himself.

Romans 8:9–10 *You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

c. That Spirit of God dwells in each of us. That is, the Spirit of Christ. That is, Christ! This is not the second coming — as glorious as that will be — this is now. He has gone away physically, precisely so that he can be near to all of his own. He has not left us as orphans. He is right now with us in the turmoil, the disappointment, the stress and anxiety. He is our Helper.

9. Conclusion

a. Jesus continues to call Himself the great "I Am," the only path to heaven, the only true measure of righteousness, and the source of both physical and spiritual life. He was staking His claim as the very God of Creation, the Lord who blessed Abraham, and the Holy One who inhabits eternity. He did this so the disciples would be able to face the dark days ahead and carry on the mission of declaring the gospel to the world.

b. Of course, we know from Scripture that they still didn't understand, and it took several visits from their risen Lord to shake them out of their disbelief. Once they understood the truth of His words, they became changed people, and the world has never been the same.

c. So how do we follow Him today? The same way the disciples did long ago. They heard the words of Jesus and believed them. They took His words and obeyed them. They confessed their sins to Jesus as their Lord and God. They believed that He died to take the punishment of their sins and rose from the dead to give them new life. They followed His example and command to tell others the truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment. They knew he would come again for them. They knew their eternal home with him was secured. When we follow Him in "the way," we can be assured of following Him all the way to eternity.

d. So as we enter into 2024 we will not let our hearts be troubled because we trust in the Lord:

   i Let not your heart be troubled, because there's a place for you in our Father's house.

   ii Let not your heart be troubled, because Jesus prepared the place for you. He opened the way. He is the way.

   iii Let not your heart be troubled, because Jesus himself is your dwelling place and he will come and take you to himself.

   iv Let not your heart be troubled, because Jesus and the Father are one, so that if you have Jesus you have the Father.

   v Let not your heart be troubled, because Jesus has come in the Holy Spirit. He is with you now, and will be with you always, not as an observer, but a Helper.

John 14:1,6 *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me…. I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*