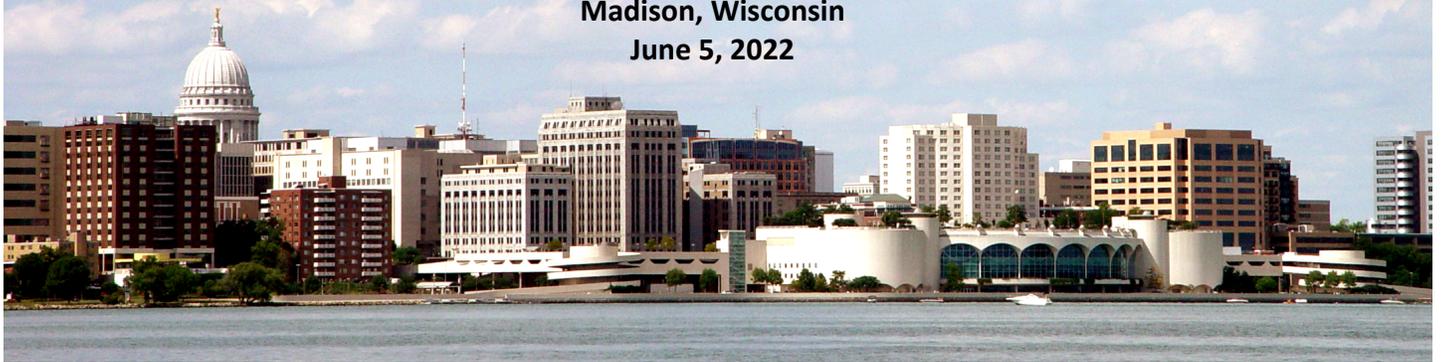


Comfort for Troubled Hearts

JOHN 14:1-6 • PART 4: A PATH TO THE FATHER

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It is good to see you here this morning, and it was good to see so many of you here yesterday for Al's memorial service. We are thankful that Crystal, and Jessie, and Lily are still with us today, and we do pray for safe travels for them over the next week or so. If you were not able to be here yesterday, you might appreciate seeing some of the pictures on the three picture boards that are now downstairs in our fellowship area. Please remember that we will be partaking of the Lord's Supper right after our study of God's word; the elements are available on the table in the entryway. And if you are visiting with us, we invite you to fill out a visitor card online at the address on the wall up here, which is also found on the bulletin board and in today's bulletin – fourlakescoc.org/visitor.

Before we get to our lesson, I'd like to reintroduce an awesome opportunity that I just briefly referred to several weeks ago. A couple of months ago, Patsy said she is up to coordinating another clothing give-away! We have done this for many years. On the second Saturday in August, we give away clothing to the community, to anybody in need, with no questions asked. It's like a huge free garage sale. We collect clothing over the summer, we go through it and sort it, and then we set it all out between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Usually, at least a hundred families are able to participate, and we are sometimes able to provide crafts for the kids who attend. This has been our version of a Vacation Bible School. And this is where your help is needed! If you would like to set up a table with a Bible-based craft of some kind, let me know. But the real need right now is for three things:

- First of all, we need clothing. Some of our senior saints have now sorted everything we have, and they are looking for more. And that's why we have passed out these cards today. If you have clothing, consider bringing it here. If you go to a garage sale, explain the program and offer to pick up the leftovers. These items can be brought downstairs to be sorted between now and August.
- And that leads us to our second big need: You can help with the sorting! We will have it all set up downstairs in a way where we can sort between men's, women's, and children's clothing, and then we sort by size. We fill up standard-size U-Haul boxes, and when a box is full, we stuff it in a room to be brought out in August. Some of the senior ladies get together during the day (see Patsy if you would like to help with the group). But, if you would like to help after-hours (on your own or with a friend), go for it! Come on over on an evening or the weekend, and do some sorting, knowing that you are helping those who are in desperate need of clothing. We have become known for this through the years. I have

social workers call to ask about it. We have a friendly neighborhood atheist who always stops by to say, "There is no Jesus, but if there is, this is what he would be doing." I can say "AMEN" to about half of what that man says!

- And this leads to the third need: If you know someone who needs clothing (or someone interested in donating clothing), give them this card, or put one of these up in a public place (on the bulletin board in a laundromat, in an apartment, at work, or wherever somebody might see it). Let me or Patsy know if you have any questions or if you would like to help.

We are starting our study of God's word this morning with the gospel, the good news concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. We respond to this good news in faith; that is, we trust and obey, even to the point where we reenact the gospel in our own lives through baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. The pictures on the wall come to us from Zimbabwe, by way of brother Lovemore Ngorima. What an awesome name, brother Lovemore! He says (last Lord's Day) that "Two souls were added to the church at Nyika today. Glory be to God for he open hearts of people to receive the gospel of Christ when being preached. We pray for spiritual growth of these precious souls." And then he had another post a few days earlier saying, "More souls are added to the church at Nyika. The Lord's church is growing numerically at local level, universally and spiritual. Glory be to God, for he open hearts and minds of people to receive the gospel of Christ when being preached." Great news, and if you are interested in following their example, I would invite you to pull me aside after worship today, and we would love to open the word of God with you.

Over the past few weeks, we have been looking at a series of comforting statements in John 14:1-6. We are thinking back to the night in which Jesus was betrayed. Jesus and the apostles had just eaten the Last Supper, and the disciples' hearts are troubled. Jesus, then, seeing this, tells them not to be troubled (or stirred up) in their hearts, and then he goes on to give a series of encouraging or comforting statements.

He starts in verse 1 with the command, the encouragement, the invitation to ***"Believe in God, believe also in Me."*** When our hearts are stirred up, Jesus reminds us to put our faith in him. We study his word, we spend time with his people, we put our faith in him, and Jesus has a way of calming our hearts.

Two weeks ago, we moved along to verse 2, where Jesus promises a prepared place for a prepared people, ***"In My Father's house are many dwelling places,"*** he says, ***"if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you."*** By way of encouragement, we looked at the place he promises, and then we looked at Jesus' promise to prepare this place.

And last week, we continued with verse 3, as we noted that Jesus promises to return and then he promises to receive us to himself. So, when our hearts are troubled, he reminds us of this return and reunion, ***"I will come again and receive you to Myself,"*** he says, ***"that where I am, there you may be also."***

This morning, let's return to John 14:1-6. We will look at the passage one more time, and then I'd like for us to spend a few moments looking at the rest of this comforting passage. This is John 14:1-6, where Jesus says,

1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going." 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do 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 but through Me."

This morning, I'd like for us to focus in on verses 4-6, yet another comforting statement, as Jesus describes a path to his Father. And this will be our emphasis this morning. Once again, I'm putting a series of brief references on the bottom up here. I would consider this to be some supporting material, and having it here might help if you are taking notes or if you would like to beat me to each one before I get to it. But even before we get to the encouraging statement, I personally would like to express some appreciation for Thomas. I know we have discussed this before, but Thomas gets a bad rap, doesn't he? In fact, his nickname is sometimes "Doubting Thomas." Going back to that time when Thomas hears that Jesus has come back from the dead, Thomas is the one who demands to see the evidence, ***"Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe"*** (John 20:25). It is good to demand evidence! I come from a long line of Thomases. My middle name is Thomas, my son's middle name is Thomas, my dad's middle name is Thomas, my grandfather's middle name was Thomas. I have an Uncle Tommy on my mom's side. You will never hear me cutting on Thomas! In our family, we refer to Thomas as the "Believing Apostle."

But here in John 14 we have another reason to be thankful for Thomas. When Jesus talks about going somewhere, and when he says, ***"And you know the way where I am going,"*** Thomas says to him, ***"Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?"*** I would suggest that Thomas has the courage to ask a question that everybody else wanted to ask, but Thomas simply overcomes the fear of looking ignorant in front of the group. We know how this works, don't we? We're in a class, the teacher says something that nobody understands, and very few will have the courage to speak up and say, "Excuse me, but I have no idea what you are talking about. Can you please explain?" It's a bit risky to do that, isn't it? We risk looking stupid. We risk getting ridiculed. We are putting ourselves out there. But that's what Thomas does. Jesus, says, ***"You know the way where I am going,"*** Thomas is confused, so he speaks up. And because he speaks up, we now have one of the Lord's most comforting sayings. So, even before we get to the statement itself, I am thankful for Thomas. And I think we also need to be thankful for those today who continue pursuing the Lord, even though they may have questions. Sometimes, when we don't understand or when we wrestle with a concept in our walk with the Lord, we may be tempted to abandon the faith altogether, "I don't get it the way everybody else in my Christian family seems to get it; therefore, I'm out of here!" Thomas, though, sticks around and he digs a bit, ***"Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?"***

And this leads to Jesus' answer, ***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*** And this is comforting to us, at least it should be. So, I'd like to take the rest of our time together to explore this a little bit. What does Jesus mean when he describes himself as ***"the way, and the truth, and the life"***?

I. And I'd like for us to start with the fact that Jesus describes himself as THE WAY.

And really, this is the emphasis in this passage. I say this, because ***"the way"*** has already been mentioned twice by the time we get to this statement. Jesus says that they know ***"the way,"*** Thomas says that they don't know ***"the way,"*** and now Jesus says that he is ***"the way."*** As I was doing some reading to prepare for today's lesson, I ran across a reference to somebody following a guide through the undergrowth in the wilderness, and the guy who is following says to the guide, "Where is the path?" And the guide says, "I am the path." In a sense, that is what Jesus is saying here, ***"I am the way."*** As we studied two weeks ago, when Jesus says that he goes to prepare a place for these men, it's not necessarily that the place isn't finished, but it's really a case of the path to the place not being finished. And at this point (in John 14), the only thing left to do is for Jesus to offer himself on the cross. As we sometimes sing, "The Way of the Cross Leads Home." Jesus is the way.

In fact, this emphasis on Jesus being the way caused Christianity itself to become known as ***“the Way.”*** Even today, 2,000 years later, we still sing, “I’m in the way, the bright and shining way. I’m in the glory-land way.” The way that we are in is Jesus. He is the path. And the path is narrow; the path is exclusive. As Jesus says in Matthew 7:13-14, ***“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*** Or, as Peter says of Jesus in Acts 4:12, ***“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”*** Jesus is the narrow way.

And Jesus doesn’t just tell us the way; he doesn’t just give directions, but he is the Way. He takes us there. Most of you have had the experience of asking where something is at Home Depot. Sometimes it’s irritating, but sometimes there’s a value to it. Instead of just pointing, often they will drop what they are doing and take you there, even if it’s all the way across the store. Sometimes now, when I ask, I will say, “You don’t need to take me there, but where are the hinges,” or whatever. I remember going in Ace down in Verona a year or so ago, I declined any help when I came in the front door, and then I heard a voice over the PA system, “Customer coming to the back of the store, and he knows where he’s going.” I love that. Sometimes, though, we need someone to show us the way. And in terms of salvation, Jesus is the way.

A year or two ago, you might remember I referred to “cairns.” A cairn is normally a stack of rocks intended to mark a path. When you are out in the wilderness and see a stack of rocks like this, your first thought is often, “This is not natural! Another human has been here before me. This is the way.” I have made stacks like this, or I’ve marked a path in other ways. One challenge I’ve had in hiking is when I’m hiking to a beach or a river, I’m so excited to get to the water, I walk around and realize I don’t recognize where I came out of the woods. So, I’ve learned to mark that spot in some way so I can find my way back. Today, we also mark paths with stripes of paint or sometimes medallions, and some of these are even reflective (which is really cool at night, to look up with a headlamp and to notice a series of glowing dots – it’s so clear, it almost feels like cheating. This is a blaze on Ely’s Peak, just outside Duluth, Minnesota, on the Superior Hiking Trail. I think it was around 17 degrees below zero when I was there back in February 2021. You might notice how the trail goes through an area where there are no trees directly beside the trail, so they have put the blazes directly on the rocks. This next picture is of a sign with an arrow along the Superior Hiking Trail on the same trip, somewhere between Duluth and the Canadian border. This next one is another variation of a sign, this time along the North Country Trail near the mouth of the Presque Isle River, maybe 40 minutes northeast of Ironwood, Michigan. I was here back in February this year, also well below zero. The North Country Trail stretches from New York to North Dakota and is marked along the way with signs and blazes. This next one is from the Lakeshore Trail along Lake Superior, directly north of here, heading out to the sea caves. I was also here back in February, and this trail was marked with medallions; and these, I believe, may actually be reflective. So these are ways we have of marking trails.

But as we think about Jesus being ***“the way,”*** let’s go back just briefly to the cairns. One challenge hikers and backpackers have had over the past few years is the building of unauthorized cairns out there in the wilderness. Imagine hiking from cairn to cairn, and then coming upon dozens of cairns. I was talking to the Eacret family about this after worship last Sunday, and they mentioned an abundance of cairns on a camping trip they took in the Badlands of South Dakota a while back. I hope you are able to see this, but there are literally dozens of these on top of a hill out there. I don’t think they were in danger of getting lost because of this, but it can be a challenge in some situations. We might imagine hiking in the wilderness, seeing a stack of rocks, and saying, “Wow, that looks cool! A stack of rocks! I think I might build a stack of rocks!” And when hundreds or even thousands of people start doing this, we have a problem. The problem is so pervasive throughout our national parks, ****PPT**** the National Park service has had to issue a warning on this. Don’t be stacking rocks all willy-

nilly in the wilderness! 1.) Leave the cairns alone, and 2.) Don't be building new ones. I'm a part of a hiking group in the Smokies, and the issue down there is that building cairns in the rivers disrupts salamander habitats. But the main issue is navigation. With dozens or hundreds of cairns, how do we know which way to go?

And that's where we get back to Jesus. When it comes to finding our way to the Father, we look around us in the religious world today, and we are surrounded by hundreds, if not thousands, of "ways," aren't we? We are surrounded by unauthorized blazes, and medallions, and piles of rocks. Jesus, though, is "**the way**," the only way. And this should be comforting to us.

II. The second comforting statement here is that Jesus is also THE TRUTH.

He is truth "in the flesh," we might say. He is the embodiment of truth. And Jesus is the only one who can say this. But it's true, Jesus is the truth. Can we even imagine making such a claim? It seems quite arrogant, unless it is true. And it is. John alludes to Jesus being the truth in John 1:17, when he says, "**For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.**" And then, Jesus himself speaks several times about the truth. We think of what he says to those Jews who had believed him (in John 8:31-32). He says, "**If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**" We tend to focus on the second half of that statement, "**You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**" It's a true statement, it's important, but the first part is also important, "**If you continue in My word, then you are disciples of Mine.**" We can be his disciples, we can follow him in the narrow way, but we must "**continue**" in his word. He is the "**truth.**"

Not everybody can handle the truth, though, as we might say it today. We think of Pilate who was standing face to face with Jesus, straight up asking Jesus (in John 18:37), "**So, you are a king?**", and Jesus replies, "**You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.**" And then, seemingly exasperated, Pilate asks, "**What is truth?**" Pilate was speaking to the Truth face to face, but he couldn't see it, even though it was right there in front of his eyes.

And really, we see Pilate's attitude all around us. Today, when presented with Biblical truth, people today will sometimes say, "Well, that may be true for you, but that is not true for me." Jesus, though, affirms that he is the Truth. And he will go on to say (later this very night) as he prays to his Father (in John 17:17), and prays for his disciples saying, "**Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.**" The word of God is truth, and Jesus is the Word (according to John 1:1). Being able to know the truth in a world where truth is not always valued is comforting to us.

III. As we continue looking at what the Lord says here in John 14, we should also note that he is THE LIFE.

And this is not new. This is a reminder for the apostles. Just a few chapters earlier, at the resurrection of Lazarus, you may remember how Jesus said to Martha (in John 11:25), "**I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.**" Then, one chapter earlier (in John 10:10), Jesus says, "**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**" And even before this, when speaking with Nicodemus (in John 3:36), Jesus had also said, "**He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**" Paul refers to this in 2 Timothy 1, when he refers to **the "...appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**" The gospel is the good news about the Lord's death,

burial, and resurrection, and when we obey the gospel, we come up out of the waters of baptism **“to walk in newness of life”** (according to Romans 6:4).

John goes on to write of this in 1 John 5:11-13, as he refers to the testimony that God has given to us concerning his son. He says, **“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”** He is the life.

Conclusion:

As I said earlier, although we have three concepts here, **“the way”** seems to be the big idea. In a sense, it’s like Jesus is saying that he is the way who reveals the truth and gives life. Without Jesus, there is no way, there is no truth, there is no life. As one author has said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way you should pursue; the truth you should believe; the life in which you should hope.” The way, the truth, the life. If you are looking for direction in life, if you are lost, Jesus is the way. If you feel like the whole world is out to deceive you, Jesus is the truth. If you feel like you are barely existing, pulling yourself along from one challenge to the next, Jesus is the life – he is the way, and the truth, and the life.

This may seem so arrogant and exclusive, but I hope we notice that it is actually quite inclusive when we realize what Jesus says at the end of this passage, **“No one comes to the Father but through me.”** What he’s giving is an invitation. And the truly arrogant thing for us to do would be to have this information and, first of all, to not use it. Imagine having a guide and ignoring the advice of the guide. That would be truly arrogant, and in many cases, dangerous. But secondly, it would also be quite offensive for us to have this information and not share it. So, yes, the way is narrow, but there is a way; there is a path. There is a path to the Father, and Jesus is the only mediator. As Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:5-6, **“...there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all...”** Jesus is the way to the Father.

And that’s something else I hope we notice here. Have you noticed that the word “heaven” isn’t found anywhere in this paragraph? In fact, in trying to stay true to the text, I have tried really hard not to use the word “heaven” in this series of lessons. Last week, I got away from my notes a bit and let it slip (sorry about that), but the emphasis here is Jesus is the way to his Father. We could perhaps make the argument that the Father is in heaven; therefore, it’s all the same, but is it? If you have grandchildren, does it matter if they are more excited to see YOU as opposed to simply coming to your HOUSE? “I want to go to grandma and grandpa’s house, because they have video games, or a pool, or whatever.” Or maybe think about marriage. When one spouse is out of town for a week or two, does it matter whether that partner is eager to come home to see the SPOUSE as opposed to the HOUSE? Jesus is the way to the Father. The Father is our goal; again, we are aiming for Him, not necessarily a street of gold, and a city with pearls for gates, and so on.

Do we believe that Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life? This is a bold claim. If we believe this, we have two responsibilities. First of all, if we believe that Jesus is the way, it’s now up to us to follow the way, to get on the path, to go wherever he leads. But secondly, if we truly believe that Jesus is the way, we have to share this. If he really is the way, the truth, and the life, we need to be telling people about this. I would encourage all of us, then, to try to share this with at least one other person this week. Share what you’ve learned this morning. Tell somebody about our singing here today. Check in on Facebook as having been here this morning. Tell somebody about the clothing give-away. We have so many ways to share our belief that Jesus truly is **“the way,**

the truth, and the life.” This is the application of this series of lessons: 1.) If Jesus is the way, we need to be following, and 2.) If he is the way, we really need to be telling people about it. I hope this passage has been as encouraging to you as it has been to me over the past few weeks.

Before we continue with singing and the Lord’s Supper, let’s go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the one and only amazing God. You sent your Son to this earth to show us the way home, to be the way home. We believe that he is coming again, and today we ask that we would always be ready for that great day. We pray that we would be faithful caretakers of your word, that we would not keep the good news to ourselves, but that we would share it freely, just as others have done with us.

We come to you in the name of your son Jesus. Thank you, Father, for hearing our prayer. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com