



John 14:1-12 - "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." ⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹²I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

The Way, The Truth, The Life



Doubts and skepticism can kick around in the minds of God's people, too. I remember one of the most pointed times that happened in my life. I was a freshman in high school and I walked down the hall to my friend's dorm room to say hello. I walked in and he was standing there, throwing a tennis ball against the wall and catching it repeatedly – which I had come to know meant that he was either thinking about something very intently or just trying to avoid finishing his Latin homework. Turns out it was the former, and he asked me, "*Matt, are you ever afraid that when you die you'll face God and find out that you believed the wrong thing? I mean, what if those other religions are right and we're wrong?*" And just like that, what I intended to be a friendly, shoot-the-breeze conversation had turned into an existential punch in the gut. Had I been thinking about this all wrong for my entire life? Were my parents and teachers lying to me all throughout my childhood? Was I embarking on the most extravagant fool's errand in history by studying to preach and teach a truth that might turn out to be not so true, after all? How could I know?

Isn't that the only question that really matters? How can I *know* instead of blindly hoping? Isn't that the question Pontius Pilate uttered as he scampered away from the Light of the world as quickly as he could on Good Friday? "What is truth?" Who are you to say? And maybe the unasked question behind the question of truth is this: Why is it so important? If it's not readily apparent by now, let me summarize: everything, absolutely everything, hinges on the answer to the question of truth. Who you are as a person, how you as an individual stand before a holy God, what meaning there is in life, what possible hope there could be in death. And once the first tile of truth falls, what follows is like a terrifying game of dominoes – everything else comes crashing down with it.

So there they were, Jesus and his disciples in the upper room on Maundy Thursday evening. With his final 24 hours of life on earth, Jesus prepared his disciples for what was coming – his betrayal, his trial, his death, and ultimately his resurrection. His teaching had always been captivating, and sometimes caused some head scratching, but tonight his words pierce through the fear and fog of his frightened disciples and cut straight to the heart. Here we read some of the most comforting and well-loved words of Jesus. Knowing what was coming, Jesus told them, **Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.** In the coming hours, it was going to feel like the disciples had the rug pulled out from under them. They'd be tempted to wonder, to doubt, to deny – but Jesus assured them of his purpose. *I'm doing this for you.*

Ever the pragmatist, and not wanting to miss out on this heavenly home, Thomas said, **Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?** Isn't this just another way of phrasing that question of truth? How can I know, Lord? I want to know that I'm not following a failed leader, that my life on earth actually means something, that my death won't be simply the horrific end of my existence! In his grace, Jesus doesn't leave him hanging. Instead, he points to the ultimate proof – himself. **Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** Jesus is not *a way, a truth, or a life*...He is **THE way, THE truth, and THE life.** There is no other way to God.

What an exclusive claim to make, Jesus! You mean to tell me that so many millions and billions of people throughout history have perished because they refused to acknowledge you as *the* way to God? Isn't that kind of exclusive? You bet it is. But don't miss the beating heart of the gospel that drives this seemingly shocking statement of Jesus. Jesus makes the claim, "I am the way," for what purpose, to be so exclusive that he drives everyone away? No! Rather than let you and me and every person in history flounder in a sea of uncertainty, Jesus puts a laser focus on the question of truth in our hearts and points the scope directly at himself. Jesus does that because he came to earth for a purpose – to be the perfect revelation of exactly who God is, what God says, and what God's plan is.



Jesus makes the claim, “I am the way,” because he came to reveal the Father’s plan, **who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth**; Jesus makes the claim “I am the way,” to accomplish God’s objective of **so lov[ing] the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life**. Do you want meaning for your life? Do you want to know the only way? Do you cherish the thought of ultimate truth? Here they are, all wrapped up in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But is that enough? **Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”** What? Philip, you’ve been with Jesus for three years. You’ve seen the miracles, you’ve heard the claims, you’ve witnessed the divine Son of God wrapped in flesh before your eyes...and you ask for more? I suppose we shouldn’t be too hard on Philip here, because isn’t that the same request that comes from my heart sometimes? *It would be enough, Lord, if you let me experience at least some success in life. It would be enough, Lord, if my attempts at being a faithful spouse and parent were met with a little appreciation instead of frustration. I could be sure of your love, Lord, if you surrounded me with more supportive people. It would be enough, Lord, if you removed that frustration/that temptation/that aggravation from my life.* But even with those requests answered in the way we want, wouldn’t our hearts simply think of more proof to demand? When we buy into that way of thinking, what we’re really doing is falling for the oldest lie the devil has to spew our way. *God’s holding out on you! If he really loved you, he wouldn’t deny you what you think you need – he’d give it!* Listening to the devil’s lies only lead to one place – doubting God’s love. Then, we sort of set up a convoluted and confused situation in our minds that leads down an ugly and unscriptural path – *If I don’t see God loving me in a way that I think he should, then I can never be sure of his love.* So we end up forgetting all that we have in Christ. We lose sight of who we are in Christ.

Listen to how Jesus responded to Philip’s request, **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father?” Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.** Don’t you see? You know me, you know God! Everything I do, I do with a purpose, just for you. I came to earth, not to condemn, but to save, taking all your sins on my back. I lay down my life on the cross, not to bewilder, but to bring you to God. I took up my life again from the grave, not to raise questions of certainty, but to put the exclamation point on God’s plan of salvation. I poured out water and the word with my Spirit, bringing you into my family through Holy Baptism, not to make you doubt and wonder where you stand with God, but to hand you your adoption papers as a member of my family. Over and over again, I place in your hand and on your lips my body, my blood, not to view the Sacrament as another question mark hanging out there in an uncertain world, but to forgive you and to remind you that I would rather die than hold your sins against you.

In Christ you have the way – the only way to God the Father. In Christ you have the truth – no more scratching your head wondering what it all means. In Christ you have life – a life that actually means something on this earth and a certain promise of a life forever with him in heaven.

So what about my friend’s thought provoking question? What happens when I die and stand before God? When that day comes, the only thing that matters is the one Way, the ultimate Truth, the One who speaks life eternal into my death – there’s only Jesus. Then, I hear his invitation, “In my Father’s house are many rooms...I have prepared a place for you.” Or another way of saying it, **“I am the way and the truth and the life.”**