

Jesus: the Way to the Father

By Rev. Clayton Spronk

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: John 14:6
Preached on: Saturday, January 1, 2011

Peace Protestant Reformed Church
18423 Stony Island Ave.
Lansing, IL 60438

Website: peaceprc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/peaceprc

The Scripture reading this morning is taken from John 14. We'll read the first 14 verses and this is the holy and the inspired word of God.

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Thus far we read the word of God this morning. May God bless the reading of his word.

I call your attention this morning to verse 6. This is the text that we consider,

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

At the end of the year 2010, it was appropriate for us to ask the question: why are we still here? It was appropriate for us to ask that question in faith with a deep heart-felt longing

to leave this earth and go to heaven. Now, this morning as we recognize the reality that we are still here, that it is the Lord's purpose for us to live yet upon this earth, at least at the beginning of the year of our Lord 2011, at the beginning of the year as we set forth our goals, as we determined what we want to accomplish, as we think about where we want to go, we ought to ask the question: where are we going? Where are you going? And knowing what your destination is, your in-point, do your goals match that? Do the goals that you have set for this year indicate that you know where you are going and where you do want to end up?

Everyone thinks about the future from time-to-time. Everyone hopes that the future will hold bright prospects. Everyone hopes that in the future they will see improvement in their lives and people want to think that the future will be filled with bright prospects. They want something to live for. "Why should I carry on today and continue living? What is there that I am hoping for?"

There are many people who at the beginning of this year are thinking about the future and when they are thinking about where they are going, and we know this, the only thing that they are thinking about is this earthly life so that when they're asking, "Where do I hope to go? Where do I hope that sometime during this year I will arrive at?" they're saying things like this, "I'm hoping that at some point this year I will arrive at a place where I have better health," perhaps. Or, "I'm hoping that at some point in this coming year I'm going to arrive at a place where I have better financial prospects. I'm hoping that at some point I'm going to arrive at a place in my life where things are peaceful and prosperous here in this world."

Well, the Bible tells us, and that's what Jesus is telling us here in John 14, that if our thinking about the future is limited only to this present life and to this world and we have not the hope that Jesus speaks of here in John 14, then we really have no hope. It doesn't matter what our prospects here on this earth are, it doesn't matter how rich, how prosperous things look like they are going to be in 2011, if we cannot say we have the hope of reaching the destination Jesus speaks of here in the text, we have no hope. As Christians, we know that the only hope that we have and the only reason that we have for moving forward in the year 2011 is because our destination, the place that we are going, is the Father's house of many mansions. Without that, all is hopeless. It doesn't matter if in the year 2011 we enjoy sickness or health, poverty or riches, it does not matter if we are happy or sad through the year 2011, if we do not have this hope that we are going to the Father's house of many mansions, then we have no hope.

But we do have hope. We have hope for this coming year because of what Jesus promises in the text. Jesus says, "There is in my Father's house many mansions." And he says to his disciples, "And you know where I'm going and you know the way to get there." And they did. They were ignorant, they needed to be instructed, so the disciples asked, and this is what Jesus wanted them to ask, "Lord, where are you going and how do we get there because we really don't know?" And Jesus gives the answer to the disciples and he gives the answer to us too today, "You do know where you're going. This is where you're going, to the Father's house of many mansions, and you do know the way. This is the

way." Jesus says here in the text, "I am the way, the truth and the life." So we begin this year in the hope that we are, we are headed in the direction of God's house of many mansions and Jesus is the way for us to arrive at that destination.

Let's consider, then, this text this morning under this theme, "Jesus: the way to the Father's house." And as we consider, then, Jesus, the way, we're going to consider in the first place the destination, where Jesus leads us. Secondly, we're going to consider how Jesus is the way to that destination. And then, thirdly, we ask this question: are we on that way? Is this where we are going? And we need to know that. We need to know that we are in the way that leads to where Jesus is going.

In the text, Jesus clearly teaches us where he is going and the beautiful thing he says to the disciples is, "I'm going away. I'm going somewhere, but I'm going there to prepare a place for you. I'm going there so that where I am, there you may be also." Jesus says he's going away, that he's going somewhere. He is teaching us that we are all going away; that we are all going somewhere; we are all on a road that has an end-point; we are all on a road that has a final destination. And what is clear is that that destination is somewhere else. That destination is not here in this life, in this present world.

There are many who would like to believe, and let's not talk about other people, but perhaps this is the yearning of our own flesh too, that there are times when we would like to believe that this is our destination. There are times when we would like to believe that this is where we get to live forever. We know that's not reality and Jesus teaches us that that's not the reality, that no one is going to live here on this earth forever. This life, this earth in its present state, is not the final destination for anyone and that must be taken to heart as we begin this new year. It's very practical.

We all know that it's very easy when we do set our goals, when we do think about the things we want to achieve in the future, we think about what accomplishments we want to make, that it's very easy to limit ourselves to thinking about this life, what do we want here in this world. And we know that's wrong. We also know that that's what people of the world are doing right now. You can listen, listen to them as they tell you on this New Year's Day what their resolutions are, what their goals are for the new year, and then ask yourself, "What are they thinking about? Where are they telling me they hope to arrive at? What are they telling me is their goal by their resolutions?" And what is evident is that in all of their resolutions and in all the goals that they set, people in this world are giving no thought, they're not looking beyond to the next life, they're thinking about life here.

But we often do that too. What are the things that you're thinking about on this first day of the year? As we think about our goals, sometimes we realize that our greatest goal in life, the greatest goal in life is maybe to get an education, graduate from college. The greatest goal in life is perhaps to build up the savings account. The greatest goal in life is to establish a family, to get married, to have children. And all of these things, all of these things are okay in themselves. There is nothing wrong with any of those goals, but ask

yourself as you're thinking about what you want in this year, where you want to go, ask yourself are you limiting yourself only to thinking about this present life?

Jesus is making it very plain in the text, "I'm not staying here. I'm going away." I'm going away to another place and you disciples, and you congregation, Peace Protestant Reformed Church, you are not staying here either. Do not live as though this world and this present life is your final destination. Some day you are going to go away and now the question is: where? What is your final destination? What is my final destination?

Well, the text tells us that Jesus is going to go to a place and that's what we're going to focus on as we consider that final destination. Jesus is going to a specific place and that's where he's going to take his disciples, but before we look at that place that Jesus is going and where he's taking his disciples, we ought to briefly ask the question: what about the people who don't go with Jesus to where he's going? What about the people who don't end up with Jesus where he is at right now? Where do they go? And, you see, the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to think about that. He wants us to think about where he's going and then also think about the other destination so that we will see we really do want to be with him, we really do want to go where he is going.

Where are those who are not going with Jesus, where are they going to end up? And one of the options that they have is not that they're going to stay here, as much as they would like to. No, the Bible is very clear there is only one other destination, that destination is hell. There is only one other place that man can end up and if we look at the text and we see Jesus is saying there is one way to go where he's going, he's the way there. The text is telling us there are many ways to go to hell. However you want to look at natural man, what way he is going, his way ends up in hell and that way and that destination is terrible. From eternity, those who end up in hell are going to experience the pain and the anguish of God's wrath and for eternity, and this is what really makes hell unendurable. They will be separated from God's love so that they will not hear one word forever and ever of love, but the only thing that they will ever hear from God is, "I hate you. With all my being, I hate you."

And if there is any interaction in hell, there won't be any fellowship. The people who are living there won't share with each other their lives in love and friendship. If there's going to be any interaction in hell, it's going to be all hatred and anger expressed to one another so that this is what some, and I'm inclined to believe that they're right, think hell will be like. It will be complete isolation and loneliness, everyone pointing the finger at everyone else accusing.

That is the only other destination and we don't want to go there and our hope is that here in the text Jesus says, "There is another destination, there is a place where I am going and I'm the way for you to arrive there too." The destination, the place where Jesus is going is very clear in the text and in the context: he is going to his Father's house of many mansions.

Mansions, many of them. Jesus is very clearly here speaking of heaven. Jesus here is opening up for us so that we may have a little glimpse into the reality and the beauty of heaven, and when he's explaining heaven, he says, "In my Father's house there are many mansions." That's the word that he uses in order to indicate that heaven is a place of immense wealth and riches and he says, "When you get to heaven, you're going to have your own mansion. This is how rich my Father is, who is your Father. He does not have to assign groups of people to mansions so that they are mansions that you have to share, but he has for you in heaven your own personal mansion."

And what will those mansions be like? Well, when Jesus uses the word "mansion," he is telling us to look at the earthly picture. Think of the mansions on Martha's Vineyard. Think of the mansions in the Northwest side of Chicago. Think of the homes that have every luxury that you can think of. Perhaps the children are thinking of the White House and, yes, there it's only a picture but you do have a faint picture of the reality that Jesus is speaking about concerning the kingdom of heaven. But then in thinking about all of those things, remember this: none of those mansions compare to the glory and the splendor of the mansions that God's people will receive in heaven.

We'll be rich in heaven, but there is more. In the whole context, Jesus is emphasizing, "This is where I'm going and this is where I'm going to bring my people, to the house of many mansions." But in the text especially and also in the context, he emphasizes, "And I'm going to the Father." And that's where you are going to be too. "My people, I am going to bring you to the house of many mansions which is my Father's house." And he says in the text, "And no man can come to the Father but by me," meaning, "This is where I bring you, to the Father."

The Father here is the Father as the Triune God. The Father here is the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the eternal God. Jesus says, "This is what I'm going to do, I am going to bring you, sinners who are far apart from God by nature, I'm going to reconcile you with the Father to this degree, that you will be in heaven with him."

In heaven, we will see the Father in the Son, Jesus Christ. We will know him. We're going to see him and know him as we do not see him and know him now. Jesus says to his disciples in order to assure them, "There is a sense in which you're already there. Here on this earth there is a sense in which you're already there because you already know the Father through me." But in heaven, we will see him.

You know, this is really the main difference between heaven and hell, that in heaven there will be love, love flowing from God the Father as an ever-flowing stream to his people. In heaven, there will be fellowship. In heaven, well, perhaps this is the word that captures it: we'll be home. We'll be home. We won't just be at a house but we will be part of a home, a family life. Jesus says, "I'm bringing you to the Father for you will be his children and you will share in his life, his fellowship, his conversation. You'll be home."

We all know even if we look at the earthly mansions, that really when it comes down to it, the outward appearance of the mansion, the rich luxuries of the mansion, don't really

mean anything, do they? From time-to-time, the lives of the rich and the famous are exposed in the news media and people who from an earthly point of view should be perfectly happy, we find out they're not happy at all. Even though they have the mansion with the luxury cars, they have the mansion with all of the luxurious possessions that go with the mansion, they're not happy. Why? Because in that home there is no unity. There is no fellowship. There is no love enjoyed between husband and wife, father and children, mother and children. The children in the home, well, they wouldn't even use that word. "I don't feel like this is home."

So it is with heaven. The main beauty, the main glory of heaven is not to be found in the external riches of heaven, but the main glory of heaven is this: when we get there, we are going to sing. We're home. We're with Father where we enjoy his love and communion forever. And of course, Jesus is promising here in John 14 he will be there, and what a blessing that is and a hope that is for us. We've never seen him, we never saw him as the disciples saw him, face-to-face, eye-to-eye in his human flesh, but we'll see him. And we won't see him as the disciples saw him with that sin-weakened human nature, the humble servant of Jehovah, but we will see the Lord Jesus Christ in his exalted state as our Savior and King forever.

And this is where we're going, to the place where all of our brothers and sisters will finally once-and-for-all be gathered. All the church will be there. If hell, beloved, is a place of isolation where no one trusts anyone else, where no one enjoys any friendship with anyone else, where everyone is constantly accusing each other and divided, well, heaven is the place where the saints receiving the every flowing stream of the love of God for them, will forever show love to one another, friendship and fellowship. There will be no sin. There will be no separation. There will be no disunity that grieves us here in the church on earth, but we're going to the place where the brethren and Jesus Christ live together in perfect unity forever.

Beloved, this is the only hope that there is. This is the one happy final destination that there is for man, to live with God the Father and Jesus Christ and the church forever, and Jesus says he is the way there. How is Jesus the way to that destination? That's the question we ask in the second point. How is it that Jesus is the one who can bring us to the Father's house of many mansions? He says, "I am the way," not a way, not one of many possible ways, but this is what is unique about this final destination, Jesus is the one and only way.

One of the things that we have in our modern days, the convenience of having many ways, many routes by which we can reach one destination. We can take the interstate. We can take highway 30. We can take other side roads if we need to get to a certain destination, and so many ways. Well, that, beloved, is the truth concerning hell. You can take any of the world's religions, it's the way to hell. You can take the way of sin, you can take the way of works righteousness, you can take the way of any false doctrine to hell, but the Lord Jesus Christ says here in the text, "I am the way, the one and only way to heaven," and he seals it when he says, "and no man cometh to the Father but by me."

Do you want to go home? Do you want to be able to say, "I am going to Father's house of many mansions and I am going to see the Father and live with the saints forever"? And Jesus says, "You must be with me. I am the way." And only Jesus is the way. Do you understand how profound Jesus' statement in the text is when he says, "I am the way"? This is one of the great "I am" statements of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of those statements where Jesus is not merely telling us that he's present, "I am," but where Jesus is very consciously and this is why he repeats it. This is, you know, maybe you didn't know that, the sixth time that Jesus made a statement like this, "I am," and this is not the last time either. He repeats that over and over again in order to emphasize something and he's emphasizing this, "I am Jehovah." That is what "I am" means. In the Hebrew, the name Jehovah means "I am," so that Jesus is very deliberately teaching us something here. "I am Jehovah. I am God. I am the way to the Father and there is no one else." No one else can say, not Mohammed, not Buddha, no one else can say, "I am Jehovah and therefore I am the way to the Father." Only Jesus can say that and therefore he is qualified, he is the one who is wonderfully equipped and qualified to bring us to the Father because he is, himself, God.

But how is Jesus the way? In order to understand how Jesus is the way, we ought to read the text this way. Jesus is emphasizing that he is the way, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way," but then we ought to read the following word this way, "because I am the truth and because I am the life." Jesus is the way to God the Father because he is the truth and because he is the life.

Again, this is a profound statement by Jesus, one profound statement after another. "I am the truth," and surely what Jesus is emphasizing here in this passage is, "I am the true revelation of the way of salvation. I am the true word of God, the true revelation of God's word concerning how sinners who in themselves cannot enter into heaven, how they can go to Father's house of many mansions." Jesus is claiming here and this is quite a claim, that he in his person and in all of his work, is the fulfillment of every single word of God. Everything that the Old Testament says, everything that the New Testament says, Jesus says, "That's me. I am the truth of God concerning everything."

God does not say anything about salvation apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Jesus is emphasizing in the first place but, secondly, what Jesus is emphasizing by saying that he is the truth, that he is the full revelation of God concerning salvation, is that this salvation is in the way of knowing the truth so that this is a very practical question: am I on the way? That question is answered this way: do you know the truth? Do you know therefore Jesus Christ who is the truth? And through him do you know the Father? But if you don't know the truth, then you're not on the way because you don't know Jesus Christ and you don't know the Father.

So the text is very clearly teaching that it is important in our day to know the truth. When men say that the truth is not important and usually they don't say that because they don't want to get rid of the truth, but they'll say doctrine is not important, they'll say what you believe is not important because no matter what we believe, we're all going the same way. The text stands opposed to that. The truth is important. What one believes is

important. Jesus is saying here, "If I was not the truth, if I am not the truth, well, then I'm not the way to the Father and I can't take you to the Father with me."

But the truth is important for you. To go to heaven and to know that you're on the way to heaven, you must know the truth as it is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what Jesus is teaching us very practically here, then, is we need the revelation of God's way of salvation and where do we find that revelation? Where do we who do not see Jesus Christ right now, who cannot talk to him as Philip did and as Thomas did? We find it in the Scriptures. The word of God. That's who Jesus is and what we learn when we turn to the Scriptures is we learn about Jesus. We learn about him. We really do. The way of God for salvation.

We learn the truth that there is no other religion that leads to God. We learn the truth that we are sinners who are in need of God's Son coming into the world to pay for our sins to make the way open for us to go to God's house of many mansions. And we learn, we learn that Jesus is in heaven in his ascension, preparing a place for us. We learn that Jesus in heaven has poured his Spirit out upon his church and is preserving us, leading us to the Father's house of many mansions. To be on the way, we need to know Jesus, we need to know the truth of Scripture.

But Jesus adds to this here in the text. "I am the way because I am the truth and because I am the life." The truth alone doesn't get anyone into the kingdom of God. The truth can be proclaimed, it can be preached, but unless there's life, no one can enter into the kingdom of God. And where does life come from? Jesus teaches that in John 5, he says, "The Father is the one who has power to give life to those who are dead," and the Father has given that life to the Son so that Jesus can say, "I am the life. I am the life-giving power. I have the life to take dead sinners and make them live again."

How do we, dead sinners, receive the life that we need, the power that we need to enter into the kingdom of God? That's through the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit that he sends upon us from heaven, but it's also through hearing his voice. Jesus makes this very plain, "I am the way, meaning that I am the one who makes the way open for my people. But there's more to it than that, I am the one who gives my people power so that they actually do enter into my life." And how does he give that power? By speaking. "The dead," he says, "will hear my voice and they will live." And how that works for us today Jesus made very plain through the disciples. He said to them, "I'm going to send you out. You will go and teach all nations and whoever receives you, receives me, but whoever rejects you, rejects me." So that Jesus is making it very plain that it's through the preaching of the Gospel that he gives the power of life; it's through the preaching of the Gospel that he gives faith, life-giving faith whereby we know and embrace the truth. So that it is through a man called by God, sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, who preaches the Gospel that the voice of Jesus Christ is heard and it's that voice that gives life to the people of God.

And where do you find such men? Where if you want to be on the way that leads to heaven, where do you find the men who preach God's word? You find them in the

church. It's really what Jesus is teaching. "Do you want to know the way? I am the way and this is my way, I reveal myself, the truth about me and God's way, through the Scriptures and through the preaching of the Gospel through the church."

Are you on the way? Don't believe for a minute, beloved, that everyone is on the way, and don't believe for one minute that you can reach heaven without the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't believe for one moment that you by your own works and righteousness can enter into heaven. And don't believe that the truth is not important, that anyone can believe whatever they want and they are on the way to heaven. And don't believe that it doesn't matter how one lives, that one can live however he or she pleases and they are on the way to heaven. No, Jesus says, "I am the way because I am the truth and the life."

Do you know and believe the truth? Do you know and believe the truth that you are a sinner and that you are saved by the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ and that your only hope of reaching heaven is that your sins, every one of them, is forgiven and that he is preserving you now by his grace? And are you living, not a perfect life, but are you living a life in which you do fight sin and seek to be pure as Jesus Christ is pure? Well, then you're on the way and may God keep us on the way in the year 2011 by his Spirit and through the preaching of his word in this church. Amen.

Father in heaven, we thank thee once again for the hope that thy word gives us, the only hope that we have through Jesus Christ, that we who are by nature on the way to condemnation may know through Jesus Christ we are on the way to thy house of many mansions and thy house of eternal joy and fellowship. Keep us on the way by preserving in our midst the truth of thy word and the pure preaching, the life-giving Gospel. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.