

The Way, The Truth, The Life

I Am

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Bible Text: John 14:1-7

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Let's take our Bibles this morning and let's turn together to the Gospel of John 14. Chapter 14, we're going to be reading verses 1 through 7. Jesus is speaking privately, personally, to his disciples.

1 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 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?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

This is God's word.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, for those of us who have had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and have found him to be the fulfillment of all human longings and the culmination of our aspirations, may we be inspired to live out this truth as the beautiful body of Christ this week. And today for those who haven't yet had a personal encounter with Jesus, may their spiritual blindness be healed that they may see and appreciate Jesus for who he is. We pray this in his name. Amen.

A few years after my mother passed away, my dad moved back to his home state of Alabama, and after Catherine and I were married, she and Candy and I would visit at least twice a year. And on the night before we were to head back home, I would slip into a real sad frame of mind, my heart was troubled because I always wondered, you know, I thought, "Will this be the last time that I'll see my dad?" And we would back out of the driveway and we would pull off and we would wave to each other until we couldn't see each other anymore and it just left me in a troubled heart state. I thought about that this

week when I read this text because this is very much the setting for our text today. It's part of what's called Jesus' farewell discourse, farewell to his disciples. It was delivered on the eve of the greatest crisis his disciples would face, the crucifixion of their Lord.

Jesus has come from God and he is going back to God, yet he must go by the way of the cross and so it's in this context – now I want you to think about this – it's in this context that Jesus gives comfort to his disciples and he gives them comfort by telling them, "I'm going to go and prepare a place for you and I'm going to come again and gather you to myself," but also in that comfort is the statement, "I am the way, the truth and the life." So it's in that context, it's in the context of comfort, that we see our next "I am" statement. We've been looking at the "I am" statements of Jesus and today, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

Now this is an absolute statement as all the others have been, all the other "I am's" that we have looked at. It's an absolute statement but, oh, there is a different reaction to this "I am" statement. You see, Jesus is not saying that he is a way. No, he is saying he is the way. The emphatic "I am the way." He's not saying, "I am a truth or I can point you to the truth," he's saying, "I am the truth." He's not saying, "I am a life. I can show you how to have life." No, he's saying, "I am the life." And if you just listen closely, if you just listen closely to what Jesus said in these verses, you will hear the slamming of the doors of all other perceived ways to God. Really. If you listen closely to what Jesus is saying, you hear all these doors slamming, all these other perceived ways of getting to God, because in verse 6, he clearly says, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

Now we are not surprised, are we, we're not surprised, we shouldn't be surprised that many object to this. Many say this is crazy. Many say this is way too narrow. Many say that this is too exclusive and they would say to us who believe this, they would say, "That's what's wrong with the world is people like you." So we expect, we expect people to object to this. We do. We are not surprised, but we should be stunned to learn that two thirds of those who identify as Christians believe that many religions can lead to eternal life. Pew Research just recently, just a recent poll, two thirds of those who "identify as Christian," now that's kind of a flimsy way of going about it because there are a lot of people who identify as Christians but perhaps are not, but two thirds of people who identify as Christians say there are other ways; that you can get to God through maybe Hinduism or Buddhism or Islam or any sincere religion. We should be stunned. In fact, that means two out of three folks, two out of three who identify as Christians, that means that potentially here today there could be those who really are having a difficult time with Jesus' declaration.

Now again, I want to remind you this statement was given to bring comfort and so we are going to look at two things this morning, two simple things: we're going to ask why isn't it a comfort for many, why do many object to this, why do many rail against this, why doesn't it bring comfort to them; then secondly, we are going to just sum up by looking at how it can be, how it really can be a comfort as it was designed to be for us.

So first, we're going to be looking at why it doesn't bring comfort and under the first heading, we're going to look at this: those who say holding this position makes me uncomfortable. Holding this position makes me uncomfortable. Let's say you're here this morning and you have a little bit of discomfort about this. Maybe you're a professing believer and you say, "I'm just a little uncomfortable holding onto this position that Jesus is the exclusive way, the exclusive truth, and the exclusive life." Well, let's run through some scenarios here, okay? The first scenario is this: let's say you are here today and you were raised in church. I was raised in church. But just say you were raised in church and you were instructed by the church and your parents that Jesus Christ was the only way to God. You came to church and your parents taught you this, the church taught you this, your Sunday school teachers taught you this, and you heard it from the pulpit that Jesus Christ was the only way and you began to get the impression that this must really be important, this must be a big deal, and so you are intellectually aware, you remember your parents said this and the preacher said this, your Sunday school teacher said this, so you are intellectually aware and so you say, "Okay, I'm in. I'm in. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. There is no way to the Father except through him. I'm in." But then as your social circle begins to enlarge, you get to high school or then you get off to your first year in college and you get your first job, and your social circle is beginning to enlarge and you begin to meet others who do not believe the same thing that you believe. They don't hold the same view that Jesus Christ is the exclusive way and the truth and the life.

I read about a young man who first year in college he met a fellow student from India and the student asked him a series of questions. The student from India said, "Are you a Christian? And if you are, do you think that your way is the only way? And also are you going to try to convert me?" But then this question, he said, "Give me one good reason that you are a Christian besides the fact that your parents and grandparents were." Listen to his answer, he said, "I didn't have any good reasons. I realized I was just clinging to the coattails of my parents' beliefs and the Christian faith had never truly become my own." When I read something like that, I tremble because I realize it could happen, that same scenario could be played out in churches across Mount Washington, right here in Calvary Christian Center; that there could be young people brought up in the church, raised in the church, and they could say things like, "I believe it. Yeah, okay, I'm in. I believe it. I believe it." And then they are challenged, they face the challenge, the tension in this world of those who don't believe it.

I think about, you'll see a picture of Hugh Jackman. Hugh Jackman is an actor. He was raised in a very deeply religious Christian home and in 2013 in an interview, here's what he said, "I was involved with so many things in the church. It was my social group. It was where I met girls. It was sort of my life out of school. Then around 16 or 17, I started questioning how come all of these nonbelievers are going to hell?" You see, he began to really understand, he began to really think through if Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, if that's really true, that means that there are a lot of people who don't embrace this, this means that they have no way to get to the Father. He began to really think that through and so he abandoned that idea.

So I want to ask you a question this morning, ask yourself: do I know Jesus in a saving way? Do I really know Jesus in a saving way? Have I had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ? Do I know him in a saving way? Do I understand that without him I have no way to the Father, have no way to heaven? Do I understand the implications of this?

Then there might be some here today who would say this, "Man, I used to believe this but now I'm not so sure." Because you're beginning to test this, you're beginning to test this reality living in a world where there are many people who do not believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and so you say, "I used to. I used to really hold strongly to this but now I'm not so sure." And what you're experiencing is often called doubt. Now, just ask yourself this question: what has changed? What has changed? You say you used to believe this but now you're not so sure so what has changed? Well, you see, in the absence of absolute certainty in life, there will always be room for doubt. There are some who are antagonistic in their doubt, there are others who are very authentic in their doubt, so we need to make a distinction. So maybe you're here today and let's say you're really authentic in your doubt and so we can experience doubt, doubt can come along not so much because what we believe is faulty, it can come along for other reasons.

I heard about a church where there was a gentleman who was teaching Sunday school, he was teaching a teenage class, and one of the young men in the teenage class went off to college, the first year of college. He came home for the summer and he had lunch with this former Sunday school teacher so the Sunday school teacher asked him, he said, "How are things going?" And he said, "Well, things are going pretty good but I'm not sure I believe the Bible anymore and I'm not sure I believe the Christian faith anymore. I'm just not so sure." You know, he began to have some doubts. And so the Sunday school teacher asked him this, shocked him and said, "Tell me who you're sleeping with." And the young man said, "How did you know?" You see, doubt had crept into his life, not because the Christian faith was weak and fell apart. Why? Because he was living outside the boundaries, you see.

Let me ask you something this morning, ask yourself: am I being honest about my doubt? If you say, "You know, I used to believe that Jesus was the only way but I'm not so sure about that now." Are you being honest about your doubt? Are you being honest about the discomfort that you're feeling by believing that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life?

Well, let's look at this one now: holding this position seems arrogant. Holding this position seems arrogant because that's what people will tell us. "You believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, that sounds so arrogant. That sounds like y'all are know it alls, you know everything." No, listen, believing in truth isn't the same as claiming to know everything or having exhaustive knowledge.

Think about a jury. Okay, a jury is called to decide a case. A jury, they are not expected to accept the guilt or innocence of a person that has been proved with absolute certainty. They are not asked to come to a conclusion of absolute certainty, that they know everything. They are only to reach a conclusion beyond, what? Beyond a reasonable doubt. You see, for the Christian it's very similar. Christians are simply following the

evidence of what Jesus' life, death and resurrection really mean. You see, Christians are looking, what has Christ said, what has he done? We are just following the evidence. Our eyes have been opened by the Spirit of God, God has miraculously touched our lives and opened us to the realities of the truth of Christ and we look at that and we just follow the evidence. So it's not a matter of being arrogant. In fact, Christian people ought to be the most humble people in the world. Sometimes they're not but they should be because what has happened to us is a divine miracle. It's not something we did for ourselves, it's something he did for us.

So holding this position is far from being arrogant, it's humbling. It's humbling. But the next, holding this position is embarrassing. Wow. You see, as we said, we're not surprised that there are those who strongly object to Jesus being the only way, and if you haven't ever felt that embarrassment, that moment where you're beginning to find that people are looking at you like you're just out of touch, you're unenlightened.

I think of Sheryl Crow. You see a picture of Sheryl Crow. She is a singer, quite popular over the years, and here's what she said. She said, "I believe in God. I believe in Jesus and Buddha and Mohammed and all those that were enlightened. I wouldn't say necessarily that I'm a strict Christian. I'm not sure I even believe in heaven." Now here's a woman who is very religious but she doesn't have absolutes when it comes to religion. She can believe in Jesus, she can believe in Mohammed, and she can believe in Buddha. So she has no absolutes there, okay?

But then there is Brad Pitt. Brad Pitt was also raised in a Christian home and he has talked a lot about this over the years, and he described his spiritual journey this way. He said, "I found my Christian upbringing to be very stifling. I always had a lot of questions about the world, even in kindergarten. A big question to me was fairness. If I had grown up in some other religion, would I get the same shot at heaven as a Christian has?" So Brad went on and he said in a number of different interviews, he has talked a great deal about this subject where he just really cannot embrace this idea of Jesus being the only way. He's had a more enlightened view, you see. He says he is more enlightened. He would look at me and you and say, "You are just unenlightened."

But here's what I want to ask you this morning. I want you to think with me. Let's take Sheryl Crow down to Florida to the Southwest Skydiving Club, okay? Just work with me here, okay? Let's take Sheryl Crow who doesn't believe in absolutes, she believes maybe Jesus, maybe Buddha, maybe Mohammed, all these enlightened people. She's willing to get a little bit from each one of them. No absolutes, though. Can't be absolute. Can't say that one of them is the only way. Let's take Sheryl down to the Southwest Florida Skydiving Club. You can count on two things when you get to the Southwest Florida Skydiving Club: an exciting experience, and number two, the need to follow some basic rules. Here are the basic rules: don't curl up in the fetal position because you can slip out of your harness; arch your back and hold your arms out in front of you to keep you from slipping out of the harness and to get you flying in the correct position; number three, stick your legs out in front when landing, no explanation necessary there; do everything your jump master tells you immediately; finally, no pets allowed on your jump. Now,

these are nonnegotiables. These are absolutes, nonnegotiables, okay? Now, let's take Sheryl to that school, okay, and since she doesn't believe in absolutes, she's not going to like that, right? So let's take her to the Relativist School of Skydiving and here's what happens: you don't have to believe in absolutes there, here's what you do, you just believe that there are many ways to get from the plane to the ground. We expect everyone's desire to skydive and we don't believe in absolute rules. Just listen to your inner voice, respond honestly to your feelings and have a memorable experience. We'll see you when you get down. Do you think for a moment that that's what Sheryl wants? Which school do you think she's going to pick? Do you think she's going to take the Relativistic School of Skydiving where you just do what you want to do? Not hardly. Not hardly.

Or let's take Brad Pitt. You see, Brad Pitt doesn't believe in absolutes either, okay? Now let's take him to where he's going to jump out of a plane and the people who pack the parachutes are called riggers. Riggers are very very meticulous about what they do. The riggers' creed is this: I will be sure always. So what they do, they know that jumpers need assurance and that everything regarding their chutes are perfect. It takes 20 minutes to pack meticulously a military parachute. Thirty folds are required. A jumper has nothing to do with the chute until they put it on before the jump. They trust in the error-free performance of the riggers and that's all they have to rely upon. Now let's say Brad Pitt goes there and since Brad doesn't believe in absolutes, he gets a relativistic rigger and the relativistic rigger says this, he says, "You know, look, some days I fold it 30 times, sometimes I fold it 20. I don't know. And some days I'm just really feeling kind of lazy and I fold it five times. So here you go." What do you think Brad is going to do? What do you think Brad is going to do? I've got a feeling that Brad is not going to want that guy. He's going to want the guy that folds it 30 times every time and takes 20 minutes to do it instead of five minutes. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Here's my point: we do not have to be embarrassed to believe that Jesus is the only way. We live in a world where people really do believe in absolutes, it's just they pick and choose which ones they want. And for me, I pick, I pick that Jesus Christ means what he says, that he is the exclusive way, truth and life.

Also, one other we'll point out here: some will say this position is not loving. It's not loving. Now we hear this quite often, people will say, "Well, you say Jesus is the only way, that's not very loving. That might hurt people's feelings." Well, Rico Tice is an evangelist in London and he helps us a little bit here. He said he was once in Australia visiting a friend. He went to the beach and he decided to go for a swim. He was just taking off his shirt when his friend said, "Rico, what are you doing?" Rico said, "Well, I'm going for a swim." His friend said, "What about those signs over there?" and he pointed to the signs that said "Danger! Sharks!" With confidence I said, "Don't be ridiculous. I'll be fine. I know how to swim. I'll be fine." His friend said, "Listen mate, 200 Australians have died in shark attacks this year. You've got to decide whether those shark signs are there to save you or to ruin your life. You're of age, you decide." Rico said, "I decided not to go for a swim." Now, don't you think it was fairly loving for his friend to point to the sign and say, "Look dude, look, don't do that. Bad decision. Don't do that." You see, loving people means warning people. Really. Caring for people means

warning people. Doing it in a loving way, doing it in a respectful way, a courteous way, but loving them means warning them.

And then I think the final one here: this position is too exclusive. This is where many people want to get off board that Jesus is the only way because it's too exclusive, it's just too closed. Now listen, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is very clear. Heaven's gate is completely open. When you look at the Gospel, it is very inclusive. It's very inclusive, it's very diverse. It's not just for 60-year-old white people like me, okay? It's very inclusive, very open, very diverse. It all happens on the front end, okay? It's open to all regardless of background, race, ethnicity, gender, station in life, or even the sins they have committed. The Bible says, "Whosoever will, let him come. Let him come and drink from the water of life freely." Whosoever. We read in Revelation 5:9, "for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." 1 Corinthians 6, "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Now notice this sentence, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Who did Paul write that to? He wrote it to the church at Corinth. He said, "Let's be clear, the door is closed, the door is closed to some but you used to be this way, you used to live this way, and you had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ who set you free from the penalty and the power of sin. You are no longer what you used to be. You are now in Christ and the door is open." So, yes, the Gospel points out that the door to heaven, the gate to heaven is inclusive and it's diverse but the gate to heaven is also a narrow gate. Totally exclusive because it limits heaven only to those who have repented of their sins and willingly trust in Jesus Christ and this is because Jesus Christ is the only Savior. He is the only way, the only truth, the only life. In Acts 4 we read, "for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Now quickly, how does this bring comfort? How does this bring comfort? For many it doesn't bring comfort but it was given, the statement was given to bring comfort. How can it bring comfort? Well, we might think of the story of the prodigal son. The prodigal son describes the spiritual condition of all those who have turned their backs on God. They are wasting their lives pleasing themselves. If you could sum that up about the prodigal, he wanted to live for himself. He turned his back, left home, living for himself. But here's what the Scriptures say about that young man. When he finally came home, his dad said this, he said, "This, my son, was dead and is alive again." In other words, there was something about this young man, he was biologically physically alive but there was something, so there was something wrong with him that he would be classified as being dead. It also says this, his dad said he was lost and is found. It also says this, that he eventually came to his senses. In other words, he came out of his ignorance. There were some things he was just ignorant of. Here's my point: every spiritual deficiency sinners have is met and overcome in Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. Sinners are lost but Jesus is the way to the Father's house. Sinners are ignorant but Jesus is the

truth about the Father. Sinners are spiritually dead but Jesus is the life and shares it with those who repent and trust in him. What a comfort. What a comfort.

You say, "Well, you know, I don't know." Well, how about this: just the chapter before, chapter 13, John said this, "Jesus was troubled in his spirit." Now think about it. Jesus knows he's on the way to the cross, he knows he's going to bid farewell to his disciples and they're going to go through the most difficult experience in their life, his crucifixion. His spirit is troubled but his goal is to comfort the troubled spirit of those who were following him. Think about it. He will go the way of the cross in order to be the way to the Father for us. He was sold by the lie, the lie of one of his disciples, in order to be the truth for us. He tasted death for every man to be the life for us. Doesn't that comfort you? Doesn't it comfort you to know what Jesus Christ did for us in our place? Jesus who was troubled in his spirit yet would face all of this ordeal for us that we might be comforted?

Let me close this morning with the words of Ravi Zacharias who said this. Ravi was living in spiritual darkness in Hinduism. Remember Hugh Jackman or Brad Pitt, Brad Pitt said, "Well, you know, I was just fortunate enough, I was just lucky enough to be born in a Christian family. What about those who weren't?" Well, Ravi Zacharias, he was born in a Hindu family but the light of the glorious Gospel shined into his heart through his mother, through his mother reading the Scriptures to him. Here's what he said, "I came to Jesus because I did not know which way to turn. I have remained with him because there is no other way I wish to turn. I came to him longing for something I did not have. I remain with him because I have something I will not trade. I came to him as a stranger. I remain with him in the most intimate of friendships. I came to him unsure about the future. I remain with him certain about my destiny. I came amid the thunderous cries of a culture that has 330 million deities. I remain with him knowing that truth cannot be all inclusive. Truth by definition excludes."

Friends, to the degree that you know you're lost and you need a way back, to the degree that you desperately want truth, to the degree that you long for a life that even death cannot take away, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Let's bow our heads.