

Sunday, March 21, 2021

This is the sixth in a series of sermons on John 13-17 (“The Farewell Discourse”).

1. [Jesus Loves His own \(13:1\)](#) [7/5/2020]
2. [Foot Washing \(13:2-17\)](#) [8/30/2020]
3. [Identifying the Traitor \(13:18-30\)](#) [10/18/2020]
4. [Christ’s Glory and How We Are To Live In His Temporary Absence \(13:31-38\)](#) [12/6/2020]
5. [Preparing a Place](#) (14:1-4) [1/31/2021]
6. **The Only Way to the Father (14:5-7)**
7. Seeing God (14:8-14)
8. Peace and Comfort (14:15-27)
9. Loving God (14:28-31)
10. Abiding in Christ, the True Vine (15:1-11)
11. Friends of Christ (15:12-17)
12. The Hatred of the world (15:18- 16:4a)
13. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15)
14. Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned Into Joy (16:16-24)
15. Prayer in His Name (16:25-32)
16. He’s Spoken That You Might Have Peace (16:33)
The High Priestly Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)
17. Jesus Prays For Himself (17:1-5)
18. Jesus Prays For His Present People (17:6-19)
19. Jesus Prays For His Future People (17:20-26)

As a quick review, it is Thursday on the week of Christ’s crucifixion, just a few hours before He will be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Christ has been spending quality time with His loved ones in a large, furnished upper room. And under the circumstances, His apostles have troubled hearts, resulting in Him issuing the command to “Let not your heart be troubled.” (14:1). If you’ll recall, the antidote to a troubled heart is to trust in Jesus Christ – believe in Him – put your faith in Him. Last time, we went over one of the reasons for why we ought to trust Him – and that reason is because He’s trustworthy! He makes us great promises about heaven and eternity, and He cannot lie. He left to prepare a place for us, He will return to receive us to Himself, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. If that were not so, He would have told us. Today, we’ll go over another reason why we ought to believe on the Lord Jesus – and the reason is because He’s the only way to the Father! He’s the only way for you to come into possession of those things that He’s promised. Putting your faith and trust in anything else (including, and especially, yourself) is foolhardy, and if you start chasing other ways to the Father, that might be evidence that His promises aren’t for you.

Last time, we ended with Jesus saying, “And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” (14:4). This statement prompts a question from Thomas, and an answer from Jesus, which is our text for today:

“Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (John 14:5-7)

Jesus had just told them where He was going and had told them on multiple occasions how to get there. This is a head-scratcher – how can Thomas tell Jesus that they don’t know where

He's going or the way there, right after Jesus tells them that they do know these things? I addressed this briefly last time by saying that they do know, but they don't seem to know that they know. They might not have connected all the dots, or they might not have been able to bring themselves to admit the reality of what was going on. But they know the way to heaven because they know Jesus.

But let's not be too hard on our pessimistic friend Thomas. The reality is, we wouldn't have fared any better (and probably would have fared worse). We're on this side of the cross, and it's easy for us to look back and see clearly. But Thomas and the others were in uncharted territory. I believe that they simply couldn't wrap their minds around what was happening. The commentators consistently suggest that the apostles were expecting Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom, so if that's the case, they would have had some pretty strong preconceived notions – and sometimes, it is very, very difficult to move past a preconceived notion. Whatever the case, let us focus on two things here: 1. Jesus is patient in dealing with answering this sincere question from Thomas – He mildly rebukes him, but He is patient. (Those of us with children might have experienced that you may have to tell the same child the same thing 10,000 times before it sinks in). 2. Thank God for Thomas asking this question. A man shouldn't be ashamed or afraid to ask a question when he doesn't know what's going on – he shouldn't sit there in silence and pretend that he knows all the answers in such important matters. Jesus's answer to this question contains, perhaps, the most important thing that you will ever hear in your entire life, and without Thomas asking the question, Jesus wouldn't have had occasion to answer it.

Moving on in the text, this week, I'd like to break this down into three parts: "Jesus Is The Way, The Truth, And The Life"; "Jesus Is The Exclusive Way To The Father"; and, "To Know Jesus Is To Know The Father."

Jesus Is The Way, The Truth, And The Life

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:6)

It's important to note what He does not say here. He does not say, "I am one of many possible ways, truths, and lives" – He says I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life. He does not say, "I'm going to direct you to the way, the truth, and the life" - He says I AM the way, the truth, and the life. If we look at all the words collectively, we might summarize it as something like, "Jesus is the only true way to eternal life." But let's look at each term individually, remembering that the context is about the way to the Father. He is the way to the Father; He is the truth as it pertains to the way to the Father; He is the life as it pertains to the way to the Father.

- **THE WAY** – When I hear about the “way,” I immediately think of two verses: “strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:14) and “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:9). I also am reminded that the early church was referred to as those who were of the “way” (Acts 9:2, 22:4, 24:14). Jesus Christ is the way to the Father, the way to heaven, the way to peace and reconciliation with God. Scripture tells us that we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh...” (Hebrews 10:19-20). He alone can provide access to the Father because He alone paid the penalty for sin and made us the righteousness of God in Him. (Isaiah 53:5; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He isn’t merely the way by example (though He is our example – 1 Peter 2:21). And He isn’t merely a prophet to show us the way (though He is just that – He has the words of eternal life – John 6:68). Rather, He IS the way itself, because of His obedience and His sacrifice – what Toplady refers to as “the double cure.” Anyone who goes to heaven must go by that way, resting fully on His merits. It’s an amazing thing to me that people will steadfastly refuse to follow this way, but such is the human condition: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*.” (Jeremiah 6:16).
- **THE TRUTH** – This concept of “truth” is a common theme throughout the book of John, with some form of the word used some 55 times. For example, Jesus is the source of truth (1:14,17); His judgment is true (8:16); He speaks the truth (8:40,45,46). But He is more than those things – He IS the truth itself. Truth incarnate. And He must be the truth because He is the eternal Word incarnate, the manifestation and declaration of God Himself (see John 1:14-18), and God cannot lie. He is true God; He is true man. His name is “Faithful and True” (Revelation 19:11). “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” (Revelation 15:3). He is the truth (the reality, substance, accomplishment) of all the shadows, types, and prophecies of the Old Testament. He is the true way to heaven, as opposed to those ways that are devised by men; if you search for some other truth about how to get to heaven, you’re not going to find it - all other claims are false. He is the truth as opposed to all that fallacy, falsehood, deceit and error. A few verses from John 1 might help: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth... For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (verses 1, 14, 17, 18).

- ***THE LIFE*** – Like “truth,” the concept of “life” is also a common theme throughout the book of John, with the word and its variants used over 35 times. For example, Jesus gives eternal life (6:27); He has the words of eternal life (6:63,68); He is the resurrection and the life (11:25-26); He has life in Himself (1:4; 5:25-26); whoever believes in Him has eternal life (3:16; 5:24). It is through Him that we are alive unto God (Romans 6:11), and it is only through His power that those who are dead in trespasses and sins can be raised to life (Ephesians 2). He calls Himself “the life” because He is the author of our spiritual and eternal lives, a primary component of which is communion with and enjoyment of Him, and following any other path will end in death, shame and everlasting contempt. (Romans 6:23). There’s a lot that could be said here, but a few passages should suffice. “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26). “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son... And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:11, 20).

Jesus Is The Exclusive Way To The Father

“...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

In case He wasn’t clear enough before about Him being the only way, He makes that clear now. Our religion is an exclusive religion, and this is non-negotiable. There’s no room here for our own works or merit. There’s no “wideness in God’s mercy” where heaven is opened to any other religion or belief system. If there was another way for a man to come to the Father, do you think He would have sacrificed His beloved, only begotten Son? It’s insulting to suggest otherwise; you despise the Son by suggesting there’s another way. He is the only way. There are a lot of wrong paths, but only one right path; just because you have gotten off a wrong path doesn’t mean you have gotten onto the right path. You can “turn over another leaf,” for example, and give up some sin that you’ve been engaged in, but if it doesn’t involve going through Jesus Christ, you’re still on a wrong path...it just happens to be a different wrong path. What I’m trying to say is, it’s not enough to tell someone to get off the wrong path that they’re on – you also have to tell them what the right path is that they need to be on.

To flesh that out a little bit, there is no way to come to the Father except by way of a Mediator (Hebrews 9:11-15; 1 Timothy 2:5). There’s no other way to obtain His favor; no other way to be granted access to His throne through prayer; no other way to enter His kingdom. You don’t come by your good works, obeying the Ten Commandments, shedding tears, following the

Golden Rule, getting baptized, being a member of the church, etc. Those things are good and necessary, but those things don't atone for sin; those things can't reconcile you to God; they are not the way to the Father – there is only one way, and that is through Jesus Christ. God is a Father to none but those who come to Him through faith in Jesus.

We live in what you would call a “pluralistic” society, where we have lots of different religions and belief systems. Children are taught from the cradle that these religions are all valid and should be respected. This society has jumped the chasm from “all religions are (supposedly) protected under the law” to “all religions are equally valid – it doesn't really matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere in whatever it is that you believe.” It's a society that teaches that there are multiple truths and that truth is relative – what is true for you might not be true for me. But there's no room for this folly in God's economy of things. This is a Satanic teaching – we live in a society that is energized by Satan. When Satan came to tempt Christ, he said, “If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” (Luke 4:7). And Christ's answer is what people today might call “narrow-minded” or, perhaps, “bigoted”: “Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (4:8). I tell you all this because we swim in this Satanic sea, so don't be so arrogant as to think that you can't be impacted by it. It will hit you from so many different angles, it's breathtaking.

A book called “Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers” came out about 15 years ago. I haven't read the book, but looking at summaries of it, it appears that a couple sociologists polled thousands of American teenagers to get an understanding of what they believe. It turns out that the most common set of beliefs (which was taught to them by their adults, and which they are now teaching to the next generation) is what the authors call “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.” It consists of five core beliefs:

1. God exists.
2. God wants you to be nice to everyone (non-judgmental, accepting, tolerant, etc.).
3. The point of life is to be happy and feel good about yourself.
4. God isn't involved in our day-to-day lives, unless He needs to step in to help you resolve a problem.
5. If you're a “good person,” you'll go to heaven when you die.

I think that's a pretty good summary of what I've seen across this country (though more and more people are leaving God out of it altogether). It's this set of beliefs that has allowed all manner of perversion to take root and flourish, under the heading of “being nice to one another” and “you can't tell people they're sinning, because we need to make them feel good about themselves.” It's this set of beliefs that results in people saying, “God didn't send the

hurricane, or the fire, or the shooter, or the _____, because God only does stuff to help us." It's this set of beliefs where people conclude that it's all about them, and they're going to work their way to heaven. This is a deadly, Satanic set of beliefs, and it saturates our society. Just yesterday, I passed by a church whose marquee said, "You are awesome!" I can't imagine a more destructive and Satanic message being peddled by a place claiming to be a Christian church! For the record, you are not awesome – you are a sinner that deserves to go to Hell!

I saw another poll that was done in America here in the last year or so. It asked whether the following statement was true or false: "God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam." Among people identifying themselves as some flavor of "Christian," 68% of them said, "That's a true statement – God does accept the worship of all religions." What a disgrace! Incidentally, in the same poll, only 44% of "Christians" affirmed that Jesus is God. Yes, Satan is gleefully running the show in most of so-called "Christendom."

To illustrate the danger of swimming in this sea of Satanic lies, when I was little, one of the things that separated me from the rest of the kids in my school was that I didn't celebrate Christmas. So, when Christmas activities were engaged in, I'd go off to the library and do an alternate activity. I was always joined by the Jehovah's Witnesses, who also didn't celebrate Christmas. In my little kid brain, I thought, "these Jehovah's Witnesses must be some good people, because they don't celebrate Christmas." I felt a certain camaraderie with them. And this is deadly! The Jehovah's Witnesses are anything but good – they say that Jesus Christ is not God! I think you get the point – just because someone shares common cause with us on some point of religion or morality or practice doesn't necessarily mean that we share common cause on the most important thing – Jesus Christ.

As another example, I received a communication from a Muslim named Muhammad a few weeks ago. He said, "I agree that God hates gays and they are damned...Did you know that Muslims love Jesus (peace be upon him) and consider him a great prophet? He is a man but not God." My reply was: "How can you consider Him to be a great prophet when you think that what He said about Himself is not true?" Sometimes when we run across a person who has a clue about this filth known as "LGBTQ" that is traversing the globe, it's refreshing that somebody actually has a clue – but believing the right thing about this particular sin is not the thing that allows you to come to the Father; it does not atone for your sins. Case in point: the Catholic Church just laughably said the right thing about it, calling same-sex unions a sin (even while the Vatican is full of sodomites), but that doesn't bring them any closer to the Father. If you can look past the hypocrisy, they fundamentally believe that Christ is not the only way to the Father – He's not good enough for them – they believe that you have to add something to Him, and then you can go to the Father. Such a gospel is a perverted gospel, and Paul says the following about anyone who preaches that: "let him be accursed" (see Galatians 1:6-9).

I'll tell you one more story. In the 1940s, an organization called "Youth For Christ International" was created. They held mass "evangelistic" rallies for young people across the world, often in large stadiums. On May 30, 1945, one such rally was held in Chicago at Soldier Field, called the "First Anniversary Rally: Chicagoland Youth For Christ," and billed as "The Greatest Youth Gathering in History." It drew some 60,000 people. Among the evangelists participating were two popular young men: Charles Templeton and Billy Graham. Both had already made a name for themselves in evangelistic circles but had never actually met before – they met backstage at this rally and became long-time friends. Lots of stuff that they said sounded great – it sounded true. A lot of it WAS true. The problem is, both men were Arminian down to the core. When you say God loves everyone and really hopes everyone will be saved, and then you say He sends people to hell for eternity...there's a lot of explanation that needs to go along with that, and it won't end well. These men, Templeton and Graham, had to come to terms with what we're talking about today in this sermon, and both failed in radically different (but similar) ways. Here's the issue that the Arminian must face: if Jesus is the only way to the Father, and you have to believe in Jesus to go to heaven, but there are people on earth who have never heard of Jesus, how is that consistent with an all-loving, all-powerful God who wants every human being without exception to be saved?

The path Charles Templeton went down was complete apostasy – he died in 2001 as a self-professed atheist. After being one of the most popular evangelists on the planet, he rejected Jesus Christ in the mid-1950s and ended up writing a book laying out his reasons. For example: "Why does God's grand design require creatures with teeth designed to crush spines or rend flesh, claws fashioned to seize and tear, venom to paralyze, mouths to suck blood, coils to constrict and smother—even expandable jaws so that prey may be swallowed whole and alive?...How could a loving and omnipotent God create such horrors as we have been contemplating?" And: "If God's love encompasses the whole world and if everyone who does not believe in him will perish, then surely this question needs to be asked: When, after two thousand years, does God's plan kick in for the billion people he 'so loves' in China? Or for the 840 million in India? Or the millions in Japan, Afghanistan, Siberia, Egypt, Burma..., and on and on? Why would a God who 'so loved the world' reveal his message only to a tiny minority of the people on earth, leaving the majority in ignorance?" (In other words – "I reject God because He's too mean and unfair!")

Billy Graham took a different path – one of false doctrine and heresy. He said: "I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus, but they've believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived." And: "I used to believe pagans in far-off countries were lost—were going to hell—if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no

longer believe that...I believe there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God—through nature, for instance—and plenty of other opportunities, therefore, of saying ‘yes’ to God.” (In other words, “There are other ways to go to heaven besides Jesus Christ, because otherwise, God would be too mean and unfair!”)

Listen, beloved. Don’t start chasing other things. Don’t get too smart for your own britches. Satan’s greatest trick is to very slightly alter the truth – to create a counterfeit; a verisimilitude. I have a bag of poison at home that I purchased recently to take care of a vole problem in my yard. The bag says it contains .005% poison, and 99.995% benign ingredients (like flavoring, to make it taste good). Billy Graham said a lot of true things...but that little bit of poison that you can go to heaven without Jesus Christ ruins everything. Look at the verse again: “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Arminians suffer a common affliction, and the affliction is that they think they need to apologize for God, like He’s not holy enough for them – like He owes us a Savior – like He doesn’t meet their high standards of fairness and goodness. So, they end up rejecting bedrock, non-negotiable, gospel truth, like Jesus Christ being the exclusive way to the Father.

Remember that our overarching topic here in John 14 is comfort. This is all intended to comfort His loved ones. “Let not your heart be troubled.” There’s no need to fret and think that we need to find another way – everything we need, we have in the Lord Jesus, and that is comforting. We don’t need to add anything to Him to improve Him. This is simple. Don’t let your minds “be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:3). For unsaved people, this passage is the opposite of comfort. They can’t stand that there’s no other way to go to heaven – they find that to be restrictive and limiting. It puts a damper on their “freedom to choose.” They don’t think it’s fair.

To Know Jesus Is To Know The Father

“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (John 14:7)

We’re getting into mysterious territory here. Jesus is disclosing something about the Trinity – I won’t have time to get into that this week, but that’s what’s happening. Lord willing, we’ll see next time that Jesus’s statement here prompts a request from Philip that results in some amazing words from the mouth of Christ.

Here, Jesus starts by saying, “If ye had known me...” This is a mild rebuke, meaning, “You’ve been with me for three years. You should know more than you do. You know me in part...but you don’t know me nearly to the degree that you should know me. If you knew me like you

ought to know me, you'd realize that when you know me, you know my Father." It appears that they had some knowledge that He was God – otherwise, they wouldn't have worshipped Him in Matthew 14:33 – "they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." They recognized Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world – but their knowledge of Him as God was somewhat fuzzy and indistinct, like the blind man who had his sight restored by Jesus saying, "I see men as trees, walking." (Mark 8:24). They should have known and understood more...but the fact is, they didn't.

His apostles were slow learners. We ought to be more patient and understand that there are people at different stages along the way, with different levels and degrees of understanding. I'm not saying to be tolerant of laziness or a lack of interest in holy things or lack of spiritual growth; but I am saying we have to recognize that we are not all the same in understanding or experience (this is why John addresses the "little children," the "young men" and the "fathers" in 1 John 2). It's one thing to understand and reject gospel preaching – it's quite another to be ignorant of different aspects of it, or have a lack of ability to articulate it, or to have an inability to comprehend parts of it. You can't throw in the towel because you get frustrated that the people around you haven't attained to your level of understanding; likewise, you can't throw in the towel because you don't know and understand as much as you think you ought to know. To the former, I say, you're probably not quite as knowledgeable as you think you are; to the latter, I say, you're probably not quite as ignorant as you think you are. John Trapp has a great quote about this: *"A man (saith Gataker) may have grace, and yet not know it (as the embryo hath life, and yet knoweth it not), yea, he may think he hath it not, as we seek for keys that are in our pockets; or think we have lost a jewel, that we locked up in our chest: yea, as the butcher looketh for the candle that sticketh in his hat, by the light of what he seeketh."*

So, if you want to know the Father and see the Father, you don't have to look any further than Christ. He is the One who reveals the Father to us (Matthew 11:27). He is the Word of God – the plain setting forth and declaration and revelation of the Deity (John 1:1). "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*." (John 1:18). He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." (Hebrews 1:3). He is the "image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15). It is in His face that God has given "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 4:6).

He tells them here, "from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." Some have paraphrased this as, "ye are beginning to know the Father from now on." He sees their sincerity and their lack of understanding and He gives them a promise – "starting now, I'm going to give you the key to understanding this: inasmuch as you've seen and known me, you've seen and known the Father." To know the Son is to know the Father because they are

both God. And He will proceed in some detail explaining this to them. And they will progressively understand more and more, particularly after His resurrection, and then again at Pentecost.

So, beloved, all things point to Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life – the only way to come to the Father – the only way to know and see the Father. Salvation, reconciliation, and redemption are through Jesus Christ alone, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12). I’d like to close with a couple verses from Augustus Toplady’s hymn, “Rock of Ages”:

*Not the labors of my hands
can fulfill thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know,
could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone;
thou must save, and thou alone.*

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
simply to the cross I cling;
naked, come to thee for dress;
helpless, look to thee for grace;
foul, I to the fountain fly;
wash me, Savior, or I die.*