

† The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Comforting Savior In the proclamation of Christ John 14:4-7

John 13:36-14:3

36 Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” 37 Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” 38 Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times. 14:1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. 7 If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

Back some twenty years ago, I was involved with a college-aged group that went to Colorado for a winter retreat. One of the obvious activities was skiing and so we had a rather large group that we took to Telluride. Of course, whenever you get a group of young men between the ages of 18-25 together, you can be assured that some kind of competition is going to ensue. Before long we all had made it up to one of the highest, steepest and most challenging runs and then one “yahoo” shouted out, “Last one down is “dog food”” or something to that effect. This small sea of young men darted out, gaining speed, arms and legs flaying (I should know as I had a great view of it from behind – if you understand what I am saying to you). As we were flying down the mountain, a few of the guys broke off the main run and were darting through the trees. The angle they were taking was moving them further away from the main run and further into the unknown.

And then it happened, one of the young men, a man by the name of Lance, took a sharp turn up this slope only to come to this steep embankment that lead down to a service road. Well, when Lance hit the road with his skis, he stopped dead in his tracks...his body twisted and he hit the back side of his head full force. He was out cold. Of course at the time we feared the worse. The EMT's were called in and as they were getting him strapped into a gurney, he started to wake

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up...in severe pain, not knowing exactly what had happened to him. And the first words out of his mouth were, "So, what's the game plan?" We tried to explain to him that he had been injured and we were taking him to the hospital. He said, "Okay...but what's the game plan?" After arriving at the hospital and a series of tests to ensure that the worst of his condition was a severe concussion, once we saw him in his room...now several hours from the initial accident, Lance once again asked the question, "What's the game plan?" Of course it became a bit of a joke for the rest of the retreat...whenever someone wasn't sure what was going on we would say, "So, what's the game plan?"

In many ways, our text this morning has this same feel to it. The disciples had been listening to and watching Jesus; hearing and learning about the love Jesus had and would continue to manifest to them as the hour of His trial and death drew nearer. But they were not fully grasping exactly what Jesus meant by His words and so, beginning back in John 13:36, Peter asks a question that to a certain extent could be loosely paraphrase, "So, Jesus, what's the game plan?" "Where are you going?" asked Peter. And Jesus tells Peter and the disciples in effect...I am going to My Father...to His house. In other words, Jesus is going back to heaven and by going back to heaven, Jesus would prepare His disciples for heaven. That was the game plan.

Then, in John 14:4, Jesus changes the vocabulary just a bit by saying, "**And you know the way where I am going.**" What Jesus is saying here is this..."I have told you "where" I am going...I have shown you the goal, that is to My Father's house (14:3) and by now you ought also to know the "way" or the process by which I will get to this goal." Jesus is telling them that they should already know the "how" Jesus will return to the Father; that is via the cross, via His dying for sin and being raised to life on the third day.

Now some may glance back up and John 13 and wonder just how the disciples were supposed to know that the way was via the cross. But let us remember that this upper room discourse does not take place in a vacuum. This is the culmination of three years of ministry together through which Jesus taught them not only the principles of living for God, but also the means by which sinful people might be enabled to live out those principles. And on several occasions, Jesus clearly taught His disciples "the way" – the path which He would take to return to the Father and reconcile sinful people to the Father. Consider:

Just after Peter's great confession of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:16), we read beginning in verse 21 -

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From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

And then, coming off the glorious Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus was seen with Moses and Elijah by Peter, James and John we read in Mark 9:30-32 these words

30 From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it. 31 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." 32 But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

In John 13-14, the disciples are beginning to ask the questions... "what's the game plan?" No...they still did not have this view of Jesus...that the way He would take would be a way of suffering, suffering for the sins of His people. And so, as Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem, just after His encounter with the rich young ruler who loved this world more than God, we read in Mark 10:32-34, these words:

32 They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, 33 saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 "They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

Beloved, the disciples knew in their heads the way which Jesus had to take, but they had not understood it with their hearts. The heart of man, apart from the working of God, is too hard...too proud to confess that Jesus needed to take such a way...such a path to the cross...not simply so that Jesus could return to the Father...but so that the sinner's own way might be prepared by Jesus to the Father. And whereas Jesus would die "for" the sins of His people...the way of Christ will be

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expected upon those who would follow Him as we must die “to” sin, if we have been changed by Christ.

But saying that the disciples should have known the game plan is not the same as their actually getting it. And so in verse 5 we have statement of Thomas saying, “**Lord, we do now know where you are going, how do we know the way?**” Can I loosely paraphrase this for us? Thomas is saying, “Lord, we don’t get it, so what’s the game plan?” Anyone who has studied Thomas knows that he was not only the doubter, but also the materialistic one, wanting to see with his own eyes and touch with his own hands the risen Christ before He would believe. We see this attitude even here as Thomas says in effect, “Jesus, if we don’t know the location, the “where you are going” then how can we know the “way” the path to get there.” I believe Thomas was wanting Jesus to say that His palace was just outside of Palestine and if you take the road up out of Jerusalem and stay a straight and true course for three days, you will come to it. Thomas, confused to say the least, is challenging Jesus a bit I believe saying, “If we don’t know the location of the goal, how can we know the process by which to obtain the goal?”

I know that we have some soccer players here so this may or may not reach you, but I think most of us understand the basic premise of soccer...you kick the ball into the goal at the other end. The destination or location is the goal and the process is running and kicking, right? Now, I know this may be hard, but imagine you know nothing about soccer. I take you out on a field of grass, divide you into two teams and say to you all, “You know how to play in order to get this ball to its location.” If you didn’t know how to play, you would be perplexed...and might say to me something like Thomas said in verse 5...but we don’t know how to play, so how can you expect us to get the ball to its location?

Jesus had been clear, but His disciples were still struggling with fully comprehending this...I believe they understood that Jesus was going to die...but they didn’t know anything after that. If Jesus dies, then what are they supposed to do? If Jesus dies, how are they supposed to get to the Father’s house? And with all this we come to the very meaty part of our passage...the very familiar, but often taken out of context words of John 14:6 where Jesus says, “**I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.**” In this verse we have a clear explanation of the process as well as the goal, the way and the destination. Here we have a clear presentation of the very gospel itself...the good news that each and everyone of us must embrace and let change our lives daily if we are to live for God and expect to see God in the life to come.

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From the time that Adam first sinned against God, both he and all his children after him have lost at least three things; communion with, knowledge of, and life from God. In John 14:6 Jesus begins by explaining to His disciples the process by which He will bring those who trust in Him to the Father's house, into heaven. When Jesus says, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life..."** He is teaching His disciples that they need reconciliation to God, revelation of God and regeneration from God. Let's flesh that out a bit here:

1. Reconciliation to God – "I am the way..."

When Adam was first created, the book of Genesis tells us that he used to enjoy sweet communion and fellowship with God, who would walk with Adam in the garden. God commanded just one thing from Adam...do not eat of "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...for in the day that you eat from it, you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). When Adam ate the fruit...his disobedience, his rebellion against the goodness of God, severed his relationship to God. Adam was no longer at peace with God in his own heart as we see him hiding Himself from God in the garden. Additionally, God, who cannot tolerate sin and disobedience in His presence, could not walk with Adam in the same way as before and God was no longer at peace with man. The way between God and man was broken.

And so, when Jesus comes and makes this proclamation saying, **"I am the way..."** He is saying, "I am reconciliation to God. I am the one who will restore peace between all those who are in the image of Adam...fallen sinners who deserve the punishment of death and make them fit for an eternity in the blissful presence of God."

When Jesus says that He is "the way" – we are to be reminded that since the first sin of Adam, man has become the smallest of desert islands amidst the most vast ocean. He is an island without resource, without any means by which he might construct a bridge or a boat sufficient enough to traverse the mighty gulf to the safe shores of the continent who is God. And so, the eternal Word, the Son of God, became flesh so that He Himself might become the causeway, indeed the very way and means by which this island of man might be reconnected to the continent who is God. Beloved, Jesus is not simply showing us the way by which sinners are reconciled to God. It is not as if He is pointing the way, saying, "Over there you will find the way that I have made for you." No...Jesus says that He is the way itself...He is the ground upon which must tread...it is by means of His death on the cross and His resurrection that He became the path, the door, the true ladder upon which we must ascend if we would be right with our Creator. Jesus is the way; the

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means; the path, the reconciliation, the peace, the only hope anyone has of being in God’s glorious presence. As one preacher has said, “His Via Dolorosa...[His path of suffering] is our Via Gloriosa [our path to glory]. Jesus is not merely a guide who came to show men the path in which they out to walk. He is Himself “the way” to the Father.

Jesus is “the way” – but we are often content with building our own ladders. We come to church saying that we will reform our lives; we will make changes as we see fit; we will resolve to be better, to watch less TV, to pray more, to cry more unto God that we might climb up to Him. Proverbs 14:12 tells us, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”** Beloved, Jesus is the way, the only way. It must be His way; dependence upon His work, His death, His resurrection; following His way of life. But we can only follow His way of life when we constantly acknowledge that it is all of His doing.

2. Revelation – “I am the truth...”

Not only must we be reconciled, believing that we are brought to peace with God by the way, the means; the very work of Christ, but we must also then know Jesus as truth, as the full revelation of God, who God is, what God is like. We must know the truth that like Adam...all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so says Romans 3:23. We must know the truth that the wages of sin is death...eternal separation from God the Father in the torments of hell. Adam believed the devil’s lie rather than God’s truth. And ever since then mankind has been groping in darkness of ignorance and error.

Humanity prides itself on what it knows. The technological advances of our times is truly extraordinary. Man’s database of knowledge is growing rapidly. What do you know? Some of us know politics; some know numbers; some know gardening; some know music or other photography. Some know children, others know adults. Some know news. But beloved, have you stopped to consider that all these things are darkness compared to the knowledge, the truth of Jesus. I dare say that anyone in Hell will cry out something to the effect, “O that I had spent less time on trivial pursuits and more time in my Bible that I might know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Jesus is truth...and according to Colossians 2:3 we find that it is Jesus, **“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”** Is this what you know? Is this who you really want to know? Certainly there is a place for knowledge of the things of the world, but do you want to know the truth...the truth not being just some facts, but rather a Person. Do you want to get to know Jesus, who is truth, every bit as much and even more as you

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want to know a friend, a spouse, a celebrity? What do these have to offer you in comparison to Jesus?

But then, this may be a call to give up something? This is an reminder to us to consider just how much influence the world has upon us even after we come to Christ. How often does the question arise, 'Must I give up this, and must I give up that, if I am going to live a consistent Christian life?' And yet, if we would truly consider our pursuits for a moment, are not the things that we speak of with such apparent yearning merely trifles as compared with communion with Him. Must I give up eating sawdust in order to enjoy a good dinner? Who would talk like that? But we do sometimes ask, 'Must I give up the pleasures of the world in order that I may have communion with Christ?' Beloved...let us not forget that Jesus is the truth and for the soul that is enraptured with Him and knowing Him as truth, all other things fade away. To pursue Jesus as the truth seeks to turn the question around. So, when the world says, 'Won't you participate with us in this doubtful pleasure or in this unholy thing?' your response will be, 'Must I give up so much to come down to that level? Must I give up the enjoyment of His word? Must I give up fellowship with His people in order to go in the ways of the world?' That would be given up. Beloved, we must not think of it as giving up anything to go apart with Him and enjoy His blessed fellowship – this is Truth; He is Truth.¹

Know the truth...know Jesus. What a detriment for us to ignore Jesus; to neglect Him who not only tells the truth, but is truth Himself. Jesus is truth personified. Jesus is everything you need to know. You want to be certain that you are right with God, then know Jesus. If you want to be a better spouse, a better worker, a better friend, a better child...then know and emulate Jesus.

I will often give this advice to people. Look at others at what they do...be it in parenting...or in their walk with God...or in some hobby they do...take what they do well and practice it...learn from what they do poorly and avoid it. And while that is good advice that recognizes the imperfections in us all...Jesus is pure, unadulterated truth. His words and His ways are without imperfections...therefore you can and must know and emulate all of Him without concern that He may be wrong in a certain area.

Pray then for a hunger and desire to be in the written Word of God, learning more about Jesus, the living Word of God. If you haven't been reading your Bible regularly, start here in the gospel of John and pray even verse by verse, "Lord, show me the greatness of Jesus, reveal Him to me for who He is truth!"

¹ This paragraph was adapted from H.A. Ironside's "Address to the Song of Solomon" pp.31-32.

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3. Regeneration – “I am the life...”

So, Jesus is our reconciliation, our peace maker with God; He is our revelation of truth and finally then we read Jesus saying, **“I am the life...”** Here then is the truth that Jesus brings regeneration to the heart of the sinner who calls upon Him for salvation. To regenerate means “to make over; to generate once again.” It implies that there is death and implies the spectacular...life from death.

Let me remind you once again of some truths you are familiar with. I know I have already shared some of this...but this is the gospel...the good news. The truth is that God is holy, without sin, without imperfection and cannot tolerate sin (which is any deviation from God’s perfection) to dwell in His presence. The truth is that all of us have sinned and fallen short of this glory or perfection of God (Romans 3:23). The truth is that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) – what does this mean. Whether you choose to believe it or not, the truth, according to the Bible...is that each and everyone of us were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Anyone who is not in Christ, who has not trusted Christ, who has not received Christ and therefore does not experience the power of Christ’s Spirit to live for Christ, is in bondage to death and in this condition will spend eternity in torments of hell all because they refused to heed Jesus as the way and the truth. But there is one more step needed to be prepared for heaven...we must be “born again” – we must be regenerated. We must be made alive in Christ.

Beloved, Jesus says, **“I am the life...”** and by this He proclaims Himself to be the great Emancipator from death. And think about this, just as not one of us chose life but received it from our parents...true spiritual life must be received, not earned, not solicited, but received from Him who is life, from Him who gives life. I read somewhere that dead men cannot walk a road...it is no use making a path if it starts from a cemetery (A. Maclaren). The bad news is that dead people cannot make themselves alive. This is true physically and it is true spiritually. The good news is that what dead people cannot do for themselves, Christ will do for those who believe; to those who are so affected by the truth of Christ their souls cry out for His life to be imparted...for the old ways of self to be done away with. It is the soul that recognizes that the best this world has to offer is no better than cotton candy. It may taste good...but it dissolves instantly, it has no lasting value and too much of it makes you sick.

But Jesus is life...He contains and imparts life gloriously, joyfully, fully. For the one who does not know Jesus...this world seems attractive and such a person wants to hold on to as much of this world as possible. For the one in Christ...this

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world is seen for what it is, shallow, a flower perhaps, but a flower that will fade away. Is this not what we read in 2 Corinthians 5:17?

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature (regenerated) the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Do we not see that this has been the teaching of Jesus who is the way and truth all along...that He is life...the giver of true life?

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (regenerated).

So then, we see that the process, the way by which Jesus returns to the Father; the way, the means by which He prepares all those whom He will take to heaven is summed up in the reconciliation provided by Christ; the revelation of truth given by Christ and the regeneration to newness of life supplied by Christ. But at the end of John 14:6 we have this reminder of the goal...the intention of Christ...the reason why He is pursuing this process... ***“no one comes to the Father but through Me.”***

Jesus makes a great and exclusive statement. This offends most today, but note that it is God in the flesh that makes this statement. Jesus does not say that He is simply one way to God among many. Jesus does not say here that He is simply a road sign pointing the way by which people may go on their own if they choose. Rather, Jesus is saying that no one comes to God the Father...no one enters into a right relationship with God, apart from believing – trusting with one’s own life, the work and words of Jesus. Beloved...do not miss this. For this means that any church, any religion, any teaching that assigns Jesus a role or place that is different from what is said here or taught in the Scripture will not bring people to God but will damn their souls to Hell. The Scriptures are jealous for no one to claim salvation apart from the work of Christ alone.

John 10:9-10

9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

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Acts 4:12

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

Remember the illustration of Jesus being “the way” the actually causeway between the island that is man and the continent that is God? Until we confess that there is no other way to cross the gulf apart from Christ...we have a false faith. Until there is a confession that there is nothing good in us...there is nothing that merits God’s smile, there is nothing that causes God to look upon us in and of ourselves to make Him say, “This one is okay just as he is” we have a false faith. For the Bible is clear...there is no one good not even one (Romans 3:10) and the only good that will save your soul is the good of Jesus in you...we call it the righteousness of Christ...and it belongs to anyone who cries out in faith, confessing themselves to be a sinner in need of God’s mercy; pleading to know nothing but Christ and Him having been crucified, killed in your place so that you might now live for God.

So, what’s the game plan? The game plan is this, receive and then rejoice in the reconciliation, the peace with God provided by the sacrifice of Christ for your sins; receive and rejoice in the revelation given by and about Christ...your need of His work and His provision for your soul; and receive and rejoice in the regeneration – the new life promised not just to those who first come to Christ...but to those who are in Christ...we are to always live in newness of life. This is the gospel...this is the proclamation of Christ...this is the game plan...Jesus is the way and the truth and the life...have you come and do you come to God through Him! Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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