

**REACH|20**

One Way

John 14:1-6

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*“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 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? 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. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

**Introduction**

Iqbal is a forty-six-year-old Muslim in Pakistan who prays five times every day and fasts daily for one month a year, because he believes that doing good will get him into heaven. Jyoti is a twenty-six-year-old Hindu mother of five in India who burns a candle each day in front of a shrine of Vishnu in her home, hoping that in her next life she will be reborn in a higher caste. Boonsong is a Buddhist teenager in Cambodia who visits the temple every day to offer rice to her ancestors in the hopes that they will bless her. Gustav is a seventy-three-year-old Swedish retiree who doesn't believe in God or any afterlife at all. And then there's you, with whatever you believe as you walked in this morning or as you watch on-line. So, who's right?!

This morning we approach one of the most important passages in all of Scripture. And it's one that I wonder if you really believe. Jesus makes a staggering claim in this text, one so sweeping, so presumptuous, so seemingly-arrogant, that we as modern people, when we really understand what he is claiming, have our breath taken away. And we think, did he really just say that?! Lee Strobel says that this is by far the most outrageous assertion that Jesus ever uttered! I want to look at four facets of this claim: Declaration, Substantiation, Implication, Application.

**The Declaration**

The claim is in verse 6. There, Jesus claims that he is the way, the truth, and the life. And that no one gets to the Father except through him.

To make sure we get it in context, let's look back. In chapter 13, Jesus has just had the Last Supper with his disciples before his death. At the end of the chapter, Jesus tells them that he is about to go away (v. 33), and that where he is going, they cannot come. So, Peter asks Him in verse 36 where he is going.

Jesus says, again, where I am going you cannot come now, but he says that they will follow him there afterward.

Jesus then tells them in chapter 14 that they don't need to worry, because the place where he is going is his Father's house (v. 2). It is what we call heaven, where God is. He says that he is going ahead of them to this place to get some rooms ready for them, and that he will come back some day and take them back with him to those places in heaven.

Then he says, "you know the way to where I am going"—heaven (v.4). Thomas is now as confused as Peter was and effectively says, "no, we don't know even where you are going so how can we know how to get there?" Jesus answers in the clearest and simplest possible way in verse 6: "I am the way. . ." You need to see this in the Greek, not because you can read Greek but because you need to see the definite article in front of way, truth, and life. "*Hay*", the, the, the. Not a, a, a. Let's look a little more closely at these three words.

### **1. The Way**

This is a route, a path, a road, the way to get somewhere. There is always a destination in mind when you talk about a road. For instance, my wife, Marty, and I were vacationing in Cooper's Rock State Park in West Virginia a couple of months ago. We read about Raven Rock, a spot in the park that had a particularly good view of the Cheat River. So, we got out our AllTrails app and found that Raven Rock Trail would do the trick. We drove to the trailhead, jumped out, and started heading down the trail, happy as clams. After a quarter-mile or so, the trail began to thin; then it crossed another, wider trail. Our trail kept going, but it began to get steep and even more narrow. I forged on ahead, convinced we were on the right trail. But with Marty unsure and lagging behind, I finally stopped and turned around.

Were we on the right path or not? It sure looked like it from the map. But surely this little path couldn't be the right one. So, we backtracked and eventually ended up back at the trailhead where we had parked the car. And what did we see, but this sign? You see, there was a way to Raven Rock. But only one way. And we had just missed the sign. McCollum Trail was a bridge to nowhere, it was just a connector trail and it petered out into nothing.

In the same way, John 14:6 is a sign for you, there is one way to God, and it is through Jesus.

How is Jesus the Way? This is really the main message of the whole Bible,

*"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body"*  
(Heb. 10:19-20).

There was a real curtain in the temple, as well as the ancient tabernacle, separating sinful man from a Holy God, lest we try to enter and be destroyed. The day that Jesus died on the cross, that curtain was torn in two from top to bottom and a way in was opened up! Jesus provided a way for our sins to be

forgiven, our debt to be paid, so that—now washed in his blood and clothed with his righteousness—we can with confidence enter into the very presence of a holy God.

## **2. The Truth**

The word simply means that which is correct, accurate, that which corresponds to reality. When it comes to something like math, there's no debate at all about what is true. For example:  $2+2=$  (kids?) 4! When it comes to science, there's a little more debate. Dare I even mention the word COVID-19? Or masks?! But eventually things seem to get sorted out and we figure it out and agree how things normally work in the material world. That's called science, provable, repeatable events. But when it comes to things we can't touch and see, like God or heaven, that's where ideas soon scatter all over the place. If you can't prove it, how do you know it's true?

The governor, Pilate, who presided over Jesus's trial just a few hours after our verses, alluded to this same dilemma. When Jesus told him that everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice, Pilate asked the timeless question "What is truth" (John 18:38)? It's an important question because truth has a way of being stubborn, as lemmings find out the hard way! Comic strip.

Jesus's answer to that question is not, "Here is the truth", but "I am the truth." What does He mean? No one had ever claimed that before. He was claiming was that He was God and as the Creator of everything, he alone knows what true reality is; and because God can never lie, everything he said was true. That is why when he came into the world (John 1:14), he came full of grace and truth.

The same, of course, can't be said of human thought—either mine or yours. We're limited, fallible, and biased. Colossians 2:8-9 says,

*"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form..."*

God has spoken in his Son and we can trust everything he says.

## **3. The Life**

That which gives energy, activity, animates. God is the only one who has life in himself; our life is borrowed, it is given to us for a time. Jesus as God can give this life to whomever he wishes. He had just demonstrated this in a physical sense back in chapter 11 when he raised Lazarus from the dead and proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life" (v. 25).

But here, I think, he is also referring to what he claimed in John 10:10, that he had come that people may have life and may have it to the full. He has come not just to give physical life but also a quality of life that both satisfies the human soul and that lives for all of eternity, beyond when this body dies. If you want life, if you want purpose and fulfillment and real deep-down joy, and if you want a life that lasts forever, then you need to come to Jesus, because he is the life.

We think there's life in other things. God said through his prophet Jeremiah that his people had forsaken him, the fountain of living waters, and had hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13). That's a great description of all of the religions and philosophies of man, including that great god materialism and its offspring comfort that rules in much of the world. We think that by doing this or by having that we will be happy and fulfilled, and in the end it is all just empty because the cisterns are broken and the water runs out!

Proverbs 13:12 says there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death. As David Mathis said, "We sin for the sake of some pleasure, and then find it empty, again and again and again." What we need is a water supply, a fountain, and that's exactly what Jesus is, the source of all life.

To make sure we get the point, Jesus reinforces this in the second half of the verse: no one comes to the Father, except through me. This is translated in the King James Version as, "but by me." For kids, family devotions, it's helpful for us to repeat that, "But by me..."

In summary: Truth lies between the way and life, for the way to life is through the truth. Without the Way there is no going; without the Truth there is no knowing; and without the Life there is no living. And Jesus says he is all three!

### **Substantiation**

This is an astounding claim. To say you have the only way of salvation? What makes you so sure? How about people who make other claims? Who's to say you're right and someone else is wrong? That's not very loving or inclusive or politically correct.

In an article within the Sept/Oct issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Ronald Inglehart says,

*"Traditional religions can be dangerously divisive in contemporary global society. Religions inherently tend to present their norms as absolute values, despite the fact that they actually reflect their societies' histories and socioeconomic characteristics. The rigidity of any absolute belief system can give rise to fanatical intolerance, as the historical conflicts between Catholics and Protestants and Christians and Muslims have demonstrated."*

And his point is that is why religion is declining around the world because people are finally waking up to the fact that there is no such thing as exclusive religious truth and that to claim so is inherently dangerous for the human race.

So what makes Jesus's claim right and others wrong; what gives him that authority? It's interesting that in our passage today, Jesus doesn't even bother with trying to substantiate his claim. His disciples had seen him do miracles for three years—miracles that no one else had ever done, showing his authority over all of creation in so many different ways and they had come to believe that he was no less than God himself. The short answer is that he is God, the very One who created the whole world to begin with and

set its rules and systems and structure in place. But how do we know that? It's all in here, the Bible. If you believe the Bible, you must believe that Jesus is God and that he is the exclusive giver of salvation.

But some of you are skeptics this morning, and let me commend you. It's good to have a healthy measure of skepticism. I need something more, you say, because all you've done so far is circular reasoning, trying to prove the Bible by the Bible. Muslims have the Quran, Hindus have the Gitas, Sikhs have the Guru Granth Sahib, secular people discount all divine authority. How do we *know* Jesus was right, outside of him saying he was right?

The answer is in an event rooted in history unlike any that has happened before or since, witnessed by five hundred people, as verifiable as any historical fact of that era, that breaks the cycle circular reasoning and roots it in substance, an event that is explained in Romans 1:4,

*“and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

It does take an element of faith to believe. But here's what Christian faith is based on: Jesus was proven to be God and therefore all of his teachings validated when he did something that no one else in history had ever done or has ever done: He rose from the dead. He demonstrated, he substantiated that he had power over mankind's greatest enemy, death. And if he has that authority, he has authority over everything else. This reality convinced fearful followers and skeptics alike that Jesus was really who he said he was. And that his words must be taken for what they are, the Truth.

### **Implication**

Are you hanging in with me so far? Good, because you believe the Bible! But what I wonder is if you have thought through the implications of really believing what Jesus just said? Let me suggest that if you haven't struggled with this statement in John 14:6, you have not thought it through deeply enough. And so we need to do that this morning. As Erwin Lutzer said, “we need to have Christ not only in our hearts but also in our heads.”

#### **1. Any other way to God is a lie**

If Jesus is the Truth, then what is anything that disagrees with Jesus? If Jesus as the Truth is the Way to Life, then what is any other system, any other teaching, any other Way? It is not the truth, it is not a way to life but a way to death.

Jesus said in John 10:1 that anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the door (and he is the door) but climbs in by another way is a thief and a robber. There is only one way in.

Listen to what a noted apologist had to say about this:

*“People say that all religions are fundamentally the same but superficially different. The reality is that all religions while they may appear superficially the same are fundamentally different. All*

*religions are not the same. All religions do not point to God. All religions do not say that all religions are the same. At the heart of every religion is an uncompromising commitment to a particular way of defining who God is or is not. Every religion at its core is exclusive."*

## **2. Any other way to Jesus than through personal faith is a fabrication**

If Jesus is the only way of salvation, then how does someone get it? I mean, does he just give eternal life to everybody? Here again we must turn to the Bible, and the answer is "no."

*For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them (Rom. 10:13-14)?*

There must be personal faith in who Jesus is and what he did on the cross in order to get the life he offers. And in order to have personal faith, you must hear about Jesus. There is no other mechanism in Scripture to get the benefits of Jesus's death credited to your account.

You say, "don't the heavens declare the glory of God like it says in Psalm 19?" For sure. And doesn't creation show everyone God's eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20)? Absolutely! But nothing proclaims the salvation of God through his Son other than his Word announced by his people!

Spurgeon famously said,

*See, then, how my text shuts out of all acceptance with God all those who do not receive Christ to be the Son of God, the Mediator. Men sometimes say, "All are right; whether they are Jews or Gentiles, whatever they may be, they are all right." Now, be it understood once for all, that the religion of Christ gives no heed to such a fancy. It claims for itself alone the solitary throne in the kingdom of religious truth. It uses no chains and racks to obtain an unwilling profession of its faith; but the unbeliever is not flattered with promises of security, but, rather, he is threatened with a doom dreadful beyond all thought. There is not, in this book of God, one single sentence which could lead me to believe that there is a way to God for the Mahomedan, for the Jew, or for any one who does not come to him through Jesus Christ.*

*The religion of Christ is exclusive in this. It declares, that other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. It declares that no man can come to God except through Jesus. All the charity of which some men talk is deceitful and valueless. We can have no hope for those who receive not Christ. We pity them, we love them, we pray for them, we plead for them that they may be brought to this; but we dare not deceive them, we dare not tell them that God will hear their prayers, if they will not come to him through Jesus Christ. No, we will be as tolerant as Jesus was, but Jesus himself said, "He that believeth not must be damned," and whatever thou mayest be, -- Unitarian, Socinian, infidel, deist, theist, or what-not, however sincere thy prayers, God abhors and hates them if thou dost not offer them through Jesus Christ, the one way between the sinner and God.*

*What! Attempt another way? Man, art thou mad enough to think that thou canst rend the posts, and bars, and gates of heaven from their perpetual places, and force thy way by thy created*

*strength? The arm of God shall dash thee down to the nethermost pit. Or dost thou think to purchase with thy riches and thy gold a foothold in paradise? Fool! what is thy gold where streets are made of it, and where the gates are solid pearl—where the foundations are of jasper, and the walls whereof are precious gems?*

The apostles understood this clearly, which is why they preached Jesus's death and resurrection so boldly in Jerusalem. When they were arrested and threatened with punishment if they continued, Peter told the Sanhedrin that we can't stop preaching and we won't because, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

### **3. Any other hope for salvation is a deception**

So what happens to those who never hear about Jesus? Not many in this country, so we don't often think about this question. But where I grew up, for instance, in Pakistan, most have never even heard the news that Jesus died in their place, and that's why they continue to try to work their way into heaven. Consider a tribal person in the jungles of Irian Jaya, no access to books or TV or the internet, lived and died and never heard about Jesus, what happens to them when they die? And here we get to the crux of the matter, and the driving motivation for world missions.

What we want to do is create a category in our minds that God understands that they never had a chance and because he's so loving and good, he'll figure something out. But I must push you back to the Bible. If it is not written, we cannot be sure we're not making it up! You're right that God will figure something out, but the point is that he already has!

The Bible's answer to that question is: it all depends. On what? On if they've ever sinned. My friends, God is not unjust—he would never punish an innocent person. Someone asked David Platt if a good man in the middle of Africa who had lived his whole life trying to do his best but never heard about Jesus would go to heaven when he died and Platt said, "Of course." The person was taken aback, until Platt said, "The only problem is that person doesn't exist." There is no good person, not one.

If they've sinned, they deserve punishment; and a sin against an eternal God demands an eternal punishment. And there is just one way of escape: hearing and believing in Jesus. So if they've never heard, where do they go when they die? To reap the reward of their sin, to hell.

This grates against us, it violates our sense of justice. We cry, "not fair!" Well, consider this: it is just, because they're paying for their sins. And if it isn't fair, whose fault is that? Has God not made the gospel available to all?! Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, will be saved! It is not God's fault if all don't hear; it's ours.

### **Application**

At this point, you may be going, Whoa, I'm not sure about all this. That's pretty extreme. And there's something about this just rubs the wrong way, like fingernails on a chalkboard. It doesn't feel right, that

someone claims to have a corner on the truth and that if you don't believe like they do you're going to hell. It feels intolerant and bigoted, very old-fashioned.

A Pew Research Center survey in 2008 indicates that "most Americans, including 57 percent of evangelical Protestants, agree with the statement that many religions—not just their own—can lead to eternal life." A Barna survey in 2017 found that 25 percent of evangelicals believe that all people are eventually saved or accepted by God. Yet, 26 percent believe it doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because all teach the same lessons. If you believe that, and some listening today surely do, you're not alone. But you're also not right, according to the Bible.

Some may even be angry with me. If that's you this morning, and you need to shoot the messenger, go ahead! But let me suggest that your quarrel is not with me, but with Jesus. If your thinking doesn't agree with his, who needs to change?

The problem is that our brains have been so addled by the incessant noise of our post-modern culture blaring its message that to claim any absolute truth is arrogant and judgmental and despicable. And because we don't want to be despised, we go along with the lies. Let God's Word blow away the mists clouding your mind and come and see the Truth as it is in Jesus, a majestic Mount Everest that is there whether you see it or believe it or not.

## **Application**

**1. Trust in Jesus** - If you have not yet put your faith in Jesus, there is one clear and beautiful application for you today: receive him! John 14:6 is not a tiny, exclusive box, a strait jacket to kick against. It is an open invitation to every single person to receive the greatest gift imaginable, the gift of Life through him who is the Way.

Tim Keller said that every other religion has someone who says, "I'm a prophet come to tell you how to find God." Jesus says, "no, I'm God, come to find you!" Similarly, a Hindu asked once asked E. Stanley Jones, "What does Christianity have to offer that our religion does not?" His reply? Jesus Christ.

**2. Surrender to the true Jesus** - I realize this is a hard saying of Jesus. Some of you are really struggling with this this morning. Jesus didn't shy away from hard sayings in order to pander to the crowds. In John 6:60, many of his disciples complained to Jesus and in fact it says were offended when he claimed to be the Bread of Life that came down from heaven to give life to the world. He didn't back down, but went on and said, that's nothing, wait until you actually see me in my glory going up into heaven. After this, in verse 66, many turned back and no longer walked with him. Jesus said to the twelve, do you want to go away as well? And Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Maybe this is you this morning. You really like Jesus, the kind of person He is, what He offers, and you've been tagging along. But now you say, I just can't swallow this teaching, that He is the only way. And it's



good you're at this point, because it's an important fork in the road for you. This really is Jesus, and if you can't believe, then maybe it's time that you quit fooling yourself.

Our mission as a church is to ignite a passion to follow Jesus. But Jesus isn't a Mr. Potato Head that you can design any way you please. He is not the burrito bar at Qdoba where you put in what you like and leave you what you don't. No, to mix our culinary metaphors, He is the whole enchilada! You can't follow a Jesus of your own making. You have to follow the real One, as revealed in this book, in all of his glory and authority.

Jesus is called a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" in 1 Peter 2:8. Jesus doesn't force anyone. But, be warned, he himself said, "Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed" (Matt. 21:44). If you stumble now, you're going to be hurt. But if you never get up, if you continue to not believe in Jesus, one day, that Rock will fall on you at the great Judgment and you will be crushed.

You see, one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess exactly what we have been talking about, that Jesus is Lord! It will be clear to everyone on that day who Jesus is. You can bow your knee now, willingly. Or else, when he comes in his glory, by force before you are then assigned to pay for your sins throughout all of eternity.

**3. Take this message to the ends of the earth** - The third application is for those of us who do believe, and even though we may struggle with some of the theological tension, we finally delight in the exclusivity of Christ because we realize that in this is his greatest glory. He is the only one who could have saved us, he's the only Savior of the world, and so all glory in the end will go to him alone!

Just a few weeks after he made this audacious claim, and after he had proven it by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus told his disciples that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him! Think about that: all authority! And therefore, based on that, he commanded his followers to take this message to the ends of the earth and make disciples of all nations.

Having found the Fountain of Life, we must not hoard it for ourselves. And that is what we've been doing, for the most part. You ask, how many people if they died today would have died never having access to the life of Jesus? About three billion. Two-thirds of the world knows or has access; one-third does not. They're dying in their sins. And they don't know a way out.

Do you care? Paul said he had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart because of the Jews' unbelief and their consequent eternal destiny. As John Piper said, "Christians care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering."

If you do care, then you should realize that something needs to change.

### **3 Practical Applications**

1. Read Platt's book
2. Connect with a missionary
  - Get their updates, pray, and encourage
  - Join their Barnabas Team
3. Plan to take a trip

God is both unimpeachably just and teeming with love and mercy

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