

Sermon May 7, 2023

John 14:1-6

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

“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. John 14:1-6

Jesus is the Way, that is, Jesus is the way and path to God the Father. Everybody wants to connect with that which is greater than themselves. That is how God created us. And we will do whatever is necessary to make that connection. Various types of meditation and yoga are popular. There are lots of religions people practice. Cults exploit this need we all have. Pleasure, alcohol, and drugs are used to fill the hole inside us. People who just can't find their way to the divine become agnostic or atheists. That's what all that is about. Well, Jesus promises he is the Way – the one who connects us with God. Once the connection is made, he keeps us connected to the divine as a grapevine holds all the branches and keeps them as part of the plant.

Jesus is the Way. Boy there sure are a lot of signs that direct us where to go. When we hit road construction, we are greeted with detour signs to get us around the construction area and then hopefully back on the main road once again. Here in Pittsburgh, there are signs indicating where to follow the orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple “belts.” We follow signs to get to the parkway, airport, downtown, uptown, and out of town. There are many signs and directions that purposefully seek to lead us in the wrong direction. These all come from the anti-Christ. So, how do we get out of here and on to paradise? It's like what Jesus said to his disciples – “Follow me.” What

exactly does that mean? It means that when Jesus says, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved,” that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord WILL BE SAVED. It means nothing depends on our ability, performance, or smarts. The thief crucified next to Jesus called upon the Lord that Jesus would remember him when he came into his kingdom. Jesus promised the thief his request would be granted. We are the same. We also suffer physical pain and death because of our sins. As we look to Jesus and pray he deliver us, it is granted to us because Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it, but to save it. To save you.

Jesus is the Truth.

In a big way there is nothing we want more than the truth. Will the stock market rise in the next year, or will the coming recession be severe enough to deflate share values? Are eggs really good for you or should they be avoided because of the evils of cholesterol? Do we have just one life or do we come back again and again until we get it right? Is the universe a few thousand years old or a few billion? Do masks really help prevent the spread of coronaviruses or not? Lest we imagine that we are among the first generations to wonder about what is real, listen to the conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate during Jesus’ trial.

For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” John 18:37-38

So we are not the only ones who have been seeking answers. We have been following science, but it doesn’t seem to be the answer. I like science. It opens all kinds of possibilities. Yet science is not the problem. My high school chemistry teacher Mr. Sivan explained that science itself is neither good nor bad. It’s how we use it. Nuclear energy can help diagnose heart disease and treat cancer. In power plants it can supply vast amounts of electrical energy. It can also be made into a bomb and kill and destroy. Right now there is grave concern over Artificial Intelligence because many concur that we as a human race are just not mature enough to use it strictly for

good, and it, like nuclear energy, can be used for very bad and nefarious purposes. We used to live in the information age. We could sniff out false advertising and sales pitches and politicians that overpromised what they or the product would do. We were not too bad at discerning when people were telling the truth and when they were lying. At least up to a point. We used to be fairly trusting folks. Those days are long gone. Now everything is so polarized and politicized that we live in the MIS-information age. Take Twitter, for example. These days people in responsible positions lie under oath, later admit they lied under oath, and they do so with impunity. There's opposite opinions on human sexuality and what gender means. It's everywhere, and we are very worried about where it is all leading and what it is doing to our country.

Jesus is the Truth. He is very plain on where we came from. What the current situation is. And how it all ends. This is not our home. Jesus is preparing a much better, even perfect world for us to dwell in with him and each other forever. He will come back and take us to that new paradise.

Jesus is the Life: When the weather is ideal, the fish are biting, we've just finished at an all-you-can-eat buffet, and everything is 65% off, we may well exclaim, "Man, this is the life!" Well, Jesus says that HE is the life. That sounds pretty good, if he can make good on his claim. Jesus does make the claim that in him we have life forever that is full, abundant, joyful, and all the other good stuff. That life begins now but is not complete until later. We are all born with empty stomachs and empty hands. We spend the rest of our lives trying to get what we believe will make us happy. What will make us glad to be alive. Or at least what might make life more bearable for the time being. We reach for many things in the hope to satisfy those hungers. One thing we quickly realize is that nothing is forever. Even the best things in this life are fleeting. This morning we stretch out our empty hands and receive the bread and wine from the Lord's table and are given Jesus who is the Life we were created to have and to live. I've seen those pill organizers many of you have so you can keep track of all your medicine. The yellow, blue, green, and white pills go in the AM section. The blue, red, pink, purple, and orange pills are for the PM. Many of the medicines work. Every day I

talk to people who say, "I never thought I would ever live this long." Pills, medicines, procedures and treatments can extend our lives for decades. But the end is always the same - death. That's where the power of Jesus enters in. When human strength and know-how end, Jesus takes over. He literally takes us over to the other side. He is the incline that leads to eternity with God. He is the bridge to the new life, and unlike the Fern Hollow/ Forbes Avenue bridge, Jesus never fails or collapses.

Today is Confirmation Sunday. It is a joyful day as three beautiful, young men and women confess the saving faith, commit themselves to being disciples of Jesus, and for the first time in their lives eat and drink from the table of eternal life. Today Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life for Makayla, Conner, and Madeline. We pray with all our heart that he will be all those things for them both now and forever. We pray that we also would know and claim Jesus as our own, he who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen!

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

Pastor Ron Breight

Christ Lutheran Church Forest Hills, Pennsylvania

Join us for worship online! Visit our website christlutheranfh.org, click the blue Facebook link at the bottom of the page, and you will be taken to our Facebook page. There you can view our 10 am Sunday service live or watch it later at your convenience.