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Easter 5
22 May 2011
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
John 14:1-14

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

When you look at Jesus what do you see?

The first disciples saw a man from Nazareth, born of Mary.

They saw a friend, a companion, a leader, and a healer.

They saw someone very wise, very religious, and smart, and kind.

When the disciples looked at Jesus they saw someone who cared for them and loved them and would do anything for them.

But in the end, they saw a man.

And just like other men and women that they cared for, they were very *troubled* to hear this Man talk about leaving them.

Their *hearts were troubled* (14:1) because Jesus said He was going somewhere and they couldn't come with Him (13:33, 36).

They wanted to follow Him.

Peter even said,

“Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you” (13:37).

No one wanted Jesus to go wherever He was going without them.

And that's how we are too.

Who wants to lose a loved one?

Who wants a friend to move cities,

or a long-time coworker to switch jobs,

or a son or daughter to leave home...for good?

Who wants their husband or wife,

parents or grandparents to leave?

That's how we are—

we love people and don't want them to leave us.

But Jesus isn't just any old person.

He's not just your friend or pal or coworker.

He's not like your grandparent or spouse—

He is God Himself.

And this, we too quickly forget.

So when you look at Jesus, what do you see?

Do you see God Himself?

Do you see the Heavenly Father? (14:9)

Do you see the One who has promised never to leave you or forsake you (Josh 1:5)—
 who has promised to be with you always, even to the end of the age (Mt 28:20)—
 who says to you now, “**where I am you may be also**” (Jn 14:3)?

When you look at Jesus, what do you *see*?

Easter, as you can tell, is all about *seeing* God.

On Easter morning we joined “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” (Mt 28:1) in seeing the risen Jesus just after visiting the empty tomb.

Then, with Doubting Thomas, we saw and touched and poked around in the wounds of Christ (Jn 20:27), all getting a little bloody in the process!

The third week of Easter we walked along the Emmaus Road with those two disciples, chatting with the *Stranger*, who opened *our eyes*, to see Jesus in all the Scriptures!

And then last week we saw Jesus as the door into the sheepfold,
 the gate into everlasting life—

by whose voice we recognize our Shepherd.

So also today—

today, when we look at Jesus we see “**the Way, the Truth, and the Life**” (Jn 14:6).

But here we must be very careful.

There’s a very dangerous and wrong way for Christ to be the Way.

Christ isn’t the Way simply by example.

He’s not just a pointer towards the Father—

and He’s not like a GPS or an instruction booklet either!

This is too often how people look at Jesus.

And when Jesus is simply the directions,

the example,

the GPS—

well, then you’ve gotten on the *wrong way*:

a way not leading to the Father or life or truth;

but the way of eternal destruction and death.

Don’t take Jesus simply as a road map.

If Jesus were simply an example here,

simply a list or criteria of how to live—

then how are you doing?

How well have you followed His Way?

How close are you to loving God and neighbor perfectly?

How’s the Way so far?

Have you lied?
 Have you spoken badly about someone at work?
 Have you disregarded the laws of this country—
 by smoking pot, or drinking underage, or speeding?
 Have you visited filthy websites or cheated on your spouse?
 Have you stolen anything, been careless or lazy at work, or hurt someone?

How are you doing at “following the way”?

This is the great lie in our society:
 just be a good person,
 just follow Christ’s example,
 just keep on trying—you’ll get there if you work hard at it,
 you’re not so bad, there are plenty of others worse than you.

Repent.

That’s not what Jesus means when He says that He is “**the Way**”.

Jesus isn’t just another Law.
 He’s not something you can check off your list and feel good about what you’ve done.
 Being a “good person” won’t cut it.

And more than that, Jesus tells us that He is **the Way and the Truth and the Life** as a word of refreshment!

 Jesus tells us that He’s the Way so that our hearts wouldn’t be *troubled*!

How hard is it to find the way in this life?
 How often do we search in all the wrong places,
 whether it’s drugs or sports or sex or alcohol?
 How often do try to follow the example of Christ,
 try to pray more often,
 try to do our devotions,
 try to get back on the right track?
 And how often do we find ourselves failing?

When Jesus says that He is the Way and the Truth and the Life,
 and that no one can come to the Father except by Him,
 He says that to you who are searching, and trying, and failing.

He says it to you who’s hearts are troubled,
 who are stressed and discouraged,
 who think this world is too hard to make it.

Jesus is the Way.

And what does it mean for Jesus to be the Way?

It means we ought to take a step back and see where it is He goes—
 and as we follow this Christ through the Scriptures,
 we find that His way is always the way of the Cross, the way of Calvary.

And this is the Way that Jesus must go alone.

He picks up the cross that has your name written on it,
 walks it up to the place of the Skull, called Golgotha,
 and lets the nails pierce *His* hands and *His* feet.

The sign above the cross no longer reads your name,
 but rather, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”

So now, when you look at Jesus, what do you see?

Yes, you see a man—
 but more than just any man!
 You see the Son of Man, God Himself pierced and crucified *for you!*

And that’s the Way!

That’s not a *way* you can check of your list of things to do,
 or an accomplishment you can pat yourself on the back for,
 or a good deed you can add to your being a good person.

No, it’s very simply the Way of Christ.

And that cross alone brought us the Truth of our salvation—
 that it’s not by us: by what we do or how hard we try, but what Christ does for us!

And with this Truth, by this Way of the cross alone, we now see in this Jesus our very Life.

“**I AM the Way and the Truth and the Life**” (Jn 14:6)—
 all for you, so that your hearts might no longer be troubled.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit