

John 14:1-14

**“The Way, the Truth, the Life”**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

May 7, 2023

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

With nowhere to go, the Children of Israel saw no path. Behind them, they see and hear Pharaoh and his armies drawing near. The Children of Israel were terrified. Death appears to be imminent. Here they are standing on the shore of the Red Sea and there is no way to safety. They see Pharaoh’s armies on one side and the sea on the other side. They are trapped. There is no way out. They need a way out, and they cannot provide a way out by themselves.

So, the Children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they cried out to Moses, ***“Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness”*** (Exodus 14:11-12).

Moses said to the Children of Israel, ***“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent”*** (Exodus 14:13-14).

There, upon the shore, the Children of Israel believed all was lost. They believed they were about to experience their demise. When it all appeared desperate, God tells Moses to lift up his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea and divide it, so that the Children of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. Moses did as God commanded.

Suddenly, there was a way. God provides for them the way. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind and made the sea dry ground, and the waters were divided.

Even as the Children of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground, doubts did not cease. Many thought, “Could the sea close over us and drown us all in a moment?”

Even when they have the way, doubts still haunt them. Doubts haunt us, too. There must be another way, but every other way is a wrong way, a way that leads to only death. They needed certainty. They needed the truth.

And before long, the Children of Israel noticed that Pharaoh's armies appeared behind them. The same peril they had before the Red Sea divided has returned. Doubts and fears increase. The army is nearing them.

But as soon as the last Israelite reaches the shore, following God's command, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the sea fell upon the Egyptians and swallowed them up. The Children of Israel have life.

God provided the Children of Israel the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

In today's Gospel lesson, we return to Maundy Thursday. This is Jesus' farewell speech to His disciples. Knowing this, Jesus is determined to comfort His disciples knowing full well what is about to happen within the next 24 hours: He is going to be arrested, tried, beaten, spit upon, given the crown of thorns, crucified, dead, and buried.

Jesus knows that His disciples will be frustrated, confused, and scared. They have seen Jesus perform miracles and signs – even showing His power over sin and death. But what they are about to witness is going to test them. So, to calm them, Jesus says, ***“Let not your hearts be troubled”*** (John 14:1a), since He is going to prepare a place for them. He also says that they know the way to where He is going. This way is as the Lamb of God who will die for the sins of the world. But they don't understand.

Thomas says to Jesus, ***“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”*** (John 14:5)

Like the Children of Israel trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea, Thomas and his fellow apostles are lost. They don't know what to do and where to go.

So, Jesus says, ***“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”*** (John 14:6).

Notice what Jesus says here. He doesn't say, “I will show you the way,” like a second Moses; but “I am the Way.” Nor “I have the truth,” like another Elijah; but “I am the Truth.” Not only, “I lead to life,” but, “I am the Life.”

Jesus is the Way that bridges a chasm. If a bridge lacks as little as an inch of reaching across, it plunges down and becomes rubble. It may have intended to be a bridge, but all it serves as is rubble.

Just as the Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea physically, dry-footed, and unhindered they had no other way. They had no other way to salvation. Jesus provided them the way.

Like the Israelites then, we too, need salvation. We may not have Pharaoh's army chasing us, but we have sin, eternal death, and Satan coming right at us – and from all sides. We need the way to go. Without a Savior from sin, death, and Satan, we are trapped.

Satan has convinced the fallen world that there are many ways, and many truths, and that when we die, life is over, so that our only fate is that we will all become worm food.

For some people, they hear Jesus' words – ***“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”*** – as condemnation. That is unfortunate, since Jesus' purpose is salvation, not condemnation. For He says, ***“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him”*** (John 3:17).

For many, Jesus' claim strikes them as unfair. I recall one episode of the Oprah Winfrey Show. Oprah was discussing salvation and heaven when she went on to say, *“One of the mistakes that human beings make is that there is only one way to live, and that we don't accept that there are diverse ways of being in the world, that there are millions of ways to be a human being, and many paths to what you call God.”*<sup>1</sup>

This soon led into a discussion with her audience. One lady challenged Oprah by saying that there is only one way to heaven and that way is Jesus. To that, Oprah said, *“There couldn't be just possibly one way. If you are somewhere on the planet and you never hear the name of Jesus, but you live with a loving heart, you live as Jesus would have had you to live, but you are in some remote part of the earth and you have never heard the name of Jesus, you can't get to heaven? Does God care about your heart, or does He care if you call His Son Jesus?”*

Well, what about Oprah's questions? Did God the Father suddenly change the rules and limit salvation to only Christians? When Jesus announced Himself as the Way, was He shrinking the path of salvation?

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noO\\_dCWtB1E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noO_dCWtB1E)

No, He was opening the door to heaven. Without Christ, the number saved is zero, since ***“no one does good, not even one”*** (Romans 3:12). But with Christ, ***“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”*** (Romans 10:13).

These words of Christ are an invitation. He’s inviting all to trust in Him and find life in Him.

But what about those who lived before the coming of Christ? What about those Old Testament believers? Are they doomed? Jesus said to Thomas, ***“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”*** (John 20:29). These words apply to us now. We haven’t seen Jesus with our eyes, yet we believe and are blessed by faith. The same goes with the faithful of the Old Testament times, since they also did not see Jesus with their own eyes, but they had faith in the promise of a Savior.

Satan does his best to lead us away from the one way of salvation. He tries to convince us that there must have been another way for the Israelites beside the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. Satan wants us all to compromise our way to salvation.

Now, there are many issues that we can compromise. We can compromise on the style and color of carpeting. We can compromise on the shade of paint on the walls. We can always compromise on the things that do not particularly matter. There, we can meet in the middle. But some issues, we cannot compromise.

There is one area where we can never compromise, and this is truth. Truth is fact. Facts don’t change. Two plus two equals four. The sky is blue.

But where is the source of truth? God’s written Word is the sole source of the knowledge of truth. Again, Jesus says, ***“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.”*** He also says, ***“If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”*** (John 8:31-32).

Sometimes compromising becomes the worst outcome. One day two women came up to King Solomon, both women gave birth to a child, but one child later died (1 Kings 3:16-28). To the surprise of one of the women, the other woman placed her deceased child with her that night while she was sleeping, and the other woman took the living child to live with her. When morning came, the other woman noticed that the child was dead, but she also realized that this child was not her offspring.

So, the two came to Solomon for his wisdom. Solomon said, ***“Bring me a sword.”*** So, a sword was brought before the king. And Solomon said, ***“Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.”***

Then the woman whose son was alive said, ***“Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.”*** But the other said, ***“He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.”*** Solomon answered, ***“Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.”***

Satan deceives the world into thinking that we can compromise on truth. He says we can compromise on the Word of God, but if we did compromise, whose word is it? God’s Word or man’s word?

So, everyone who imagines that they have found the truth apart from Jesus and His Word is deluding himself. Without God, there is no truth.

Last Sunday as I was driving back home from church, my radio was set to WIZM. To my surprise NBC’s *Meet the Press* was on. The host Chuck Todd asked his guest, ***“Are you confident that gender is not a spectrum? There is a lot of scientific research that says that gender is a spectrum.”***<sup>2</sup>

As those were the first words I heard on my radio, I thought, “Would this have even been a question five years ago? We have certainly come a long way in so short of time. Just stating that there is scientific research doesn’t make it fact. Tell me more about this ‘scientific research.’ Prove it!”

Also last week, I saw a clip from ABC’s *The View* where co-host Whoopi Goldberg argued that God would be in favor of gender reassignment surgeries. She said, ***“What Bible are [they] reading? Because God was really clear!”***<sup>3</sup> Just stating that the Bible approves what you want doesn’t make it fact. Prove it. Show me the chapter and the verse!

In Scripture, God reveals that He knitted us together in our mother’s womb as male and female (Psalm 139:13, Genesis 1). Jesus, God in human flesh, also affirmed this truth (Matthew 19:4).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/video/april-30-sec-mayorkas-vivek-ramaswamy-and-luke-russert-171913797525>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/whoopi-goldberg-appeals-to-bible-in-debate-on-trans-surgeries.html>

We can't compromise on truth. It's either a baby or it isn't. Men cannot become women. Women cannot become men.

If a society is no longer based on truth, then what do we have? We have lies and Satan is the Father of Lies.

We cannot live by lies. We can only live by Jesus, who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Living by lies can only lead to eternal death. But sometimes, we can get caught up in lies, since lies are so attractive. And when we come to the realization that we have been fooled, we repent and ask God for His forgiveness for which He always forgives.

Living only in God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, we have life. Jesus alone provides the assurance of eternal life. Every other "way" leads to eternal death. Jesus assures us of eternal life through His Means of Grace: Word and Sacrament.

Here, in this place, Jesus leads us, He teaches us, and He gives us eternal life. Jesus is the only way to true joy and true life. His death on the cross changed everything. His resurrection from the dead is what secures for us the joys that transcend all the changes of this fallen, sinful world.

So, when we cling to Jesus and His Word, we cling to none other than God Himself. In Christ, we are certain and secure in a changing world. This is why He continually comforts us and reassures us that He is still in control as we receive His forgiveness, hear His unchanging Word, and receive His medicine of immortality at the Lord's Table. Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life of salvation through God the Father. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**