

The Way to the Father

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[0 : 00] Our Father in heaven, thank you for your life-giving word, these comforting words, these true words of the Lord Jesus. Please help us to understand them well and to have them ringing in our lives as we live in this world for your glory.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if someone asked you how you get to be with God, I wonder what you'd say.

Why would you try and prescribe a list of rights and wrongs, things to do, places to be, turns to take along the way until you eventually made it? Sort of like Dorothy in Wizard of Oz, you know, off to see the wizard, follow the yellow brick road and we'll go.

So, this morning we're going to see the disciples perplexed because they are told that they know the way to the Father, but they don't think they know the way to the Father.

Something's going on here. Judas has gone to betray Jesus in the last sentence beforehand. The accounts given for us in verses 18 to 30.

[1 : 12] It didn't come by surprise to Jesus. Jesus knew that one was going to betray him and he's told them so. And then even after Judas is exposed, it's still Jesus who's in control.

Sending Judas on his way, even more quickly than he might have been planned to go. While at the same time, Judas has every opportunity, doesn't he, to repent of his wicked intentions and plead forgiveness, but he doesn't.

And now, it's time. It's time for the Son to be glorified. The Son of Man to be glorified, verse 31.

When he'd gone out, that is Judas, Jesus said to him, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

We're in the last three days of Jesus' life on earth, and it's the last hours of Jesus' life on earth before he's crucified.

The last hours now. The Greeks have come to find Jesus. A major turning point in the Gospels happened. And now it's time for the Son of Man to be glorified.

[2 : 22] And the way for him to be glorified is to leave the world and go to be with the Father. Which would come through his sacrifice on the cross.

Now things are really hotting up now in John's Gospel. It's as if it's already happened now that Judas is headed out.

The wheels are put in place in unstoppable motion now that the Son of Man is going to be glorified. And we see that it's through the betrayal and death and resurrection and ascension that Jesus will be glorified.

And the Father will be glorified there in verse 31. It's for the culmination of the Father's will that this will happen. And it's been promised since before the beginning of time.

That is the time we're in now. It's imminent, only hours away from when the Son of Man will be crucified, buried, raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of the Father to reign in his eternal kingdom over the entire universe as a Son of Man.

[3 : 31] Glorification in that everyone and everything in the universe will rightly praise the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

Jesus will be centre stage and the way to glory makes him deserving of this glory. He set the example.

And the example will take him not just to foot washing, but to crucifixion on the cross. He set them example that they're to follow.

Leadership in humility and service. And now he's going where they cannot go yet, verse 33. Little children, in a little while I'm with you, you will seek me.

And just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I'm going, you cannot come. He's told the Jews he was going somewhere they couldn't go. The Jews being the Jewish leaders, way back in chapter 7.

[4 : 37] And so given what he's done and what he'll be leaving them, he gives them a new commandment. And this new commandment you see there, you love one another just as I have loved you.

It will demonstrate to the world that they are his disciples, that they have learnt what it means to be his followers, having learnt from his example.

This is the new marching order for the new covenant people, to love one another just as I have loved you. And how has Jesus loved them?

How will Jesus love them? Sacrificially? Humbly? Truly? Honestly? Rightly? He served them, set the example on the trajectory towards his death on the cross.

1 John chapter 4 verse 10 says this, This is love. Not that we've loved God, but that he sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

[5 : 52] This is the standard of love that the disciples are to have for one another. This is the standard of love that believers are to have for one another.

It's not a love driven by lustful desires. It's a love which pushes you to the limit of human endurance. It's difficult love, inconvenient love, costly love.

It's nothing to do with how good you make me feel about you love. It's not loving the easy, beautiful people, because that's easy.

It's loving fellow believers, other Christians, through the difficult and challenging times. When we deal with the mess of sin-souring relationships, we're told that love covers a multitude of sins.

In 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 8. Sometimes it's almost easier, isn't it, for us to love non-Christians than believers. We'll do all kinds of things, overlook all kinds of things, be exceedingly patient with those who are not yet followers of Jesus, but not so with our brothers and sisters, who've confessed that Jesus is their Lord and Saviour.

[7 : 22] We are to love one another. It's not an optional extra. It's actually a command in the Scriptures. It's imperative. Jesus has set the example of foot washing, and in a matter of hours' time to come, he'll set them the example, the ultimate example, to love one another.

It's to be the signature, the public sign, the badge of identity that they are Jesus' people. It's hard enough being Christians in the world, let alone having other Christians not love you either.

Love is very practical. Tertullian, the one of the church fathers, wrote about a century after John and quoted the pagans marvelling at Christians' fellowship, who was saying, see how they love one another, how they are ready to even die for one another.

That was the pagans looking on, seeing how the Christians loved and cared for each other. If Jesus set the example of humble service last week, this week he'd see him stepping up even further, which is even more profound.

We're to love one another just as he's loved us. The just as is the hard part. It's all very good in theory.

[8 : 53] But here's the challenge. It's all good in theory to love those we have little to do with at a distance. That's easy. It's a completely different matter to love those who are in the same family, the same church as us.

And there are other believers that you might find able to believe. Well, you want the best for, are there? Are there believers that you wouldn't be willing to die for?

If there is, well then there's some attitude, something to work on in our lives. We'll back to the text a bit more now. Peter protests his love for Jesus in verse 36.

He has some inkling to what's going to happen and he protests that he's willing to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus. Wherever Jesus is going, Peter wants to go there too, bless his heart.

But Jesus knows better. It's one thing to boast about your allegiance in the quiet comfort when you've got a full belly, in a warm room, insecure and comfort there, but another in the cold early hours of the morning when the world is actually angry with your leader and hunting him down.

[10 : 07] Time will tell Peter. Jesus knows that all will leave him, even Peter, and Peter will deny him three times. But before we get too hard on Peter, when have we been put to the test of our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ?

When have we been asked to love as Jesus loved in reality? And when the time comes, will we do it? Stripped of our comforts and security, would we still love others as Jesus loved us?

It's all very easy. Yes, I'll love believers as Jesus loved me, but the proof's in the doing when it comes to personal cost. And so we see in verse chapter 14, the good thing is that Jesus, well, he's very aware of the disciples' situation.

He knows they're troubled. I mean, Jesus has been troubled and he knows that these disciples who are around him are troubled now. They're upset about what's going on.

And Peter's symptomatic of them all. He's told them he's about to leave them in chapter 13, verse 33. He's only going to be with them for a little while longer and he comforts the disciples now in their distress.

[11 : 33] He's going to be betrayed and where he goes, they cannot go yet. But Jesus commands them, tells them straight, don't be troubled.

Believe in God the Father. Believe in Jesus the Son. Don't be troubled. Believe. It's a command as well. It's not an optional extra.

Not believing is disobedience to what Jesus calls his disciples to do. It's a command to believe, to have faith in an object, in God himself and in Jesus, God's Son.

To believe is to trust. That's what belief is. This is the trust of John's Gospel that people would believe in Jesus and so have life in his name.

And notice it isn't that Jesus going to enter heaven and then knock up a few hotel rooms for them when he gets there. That's not what's going on here. It's, well look at it, let not your hearts be troubled.

[12 : 43] Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house and many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you I go to prepare a place for you. It's in his going that he prepares a place for them.

It's in his departure that he prepares a place for them. How will he go? How will he depart? Well he will be lifted up is how he goes.

His going is by the way of the cross and resurrection and exaltation. That is the way, that is the way he will open the door to glory to the Father's house.

But notice then the promises that he will return. The return here is going to be his second coming when he returns on the last day. He will come and take his disciples to be with him.

Raise them from the dead as well. And he will bring them safely to the Father's side. And he tells in verse 4 you know the way where I'm going to where I'm going.

[13 : 53] You do know. But bless Thomas' heart I love him. He says he says it for everyone doesn't he? Jesus, we actually don't know.

Where is the destination Jesus? I mean then we can at least try to get there. Give us the coordinates and we'll plug them into the Google Maps and we'll get there.

That's how we'll do it. However, they do not know the way where Jesus is going. They do know it but they don't realise it yet. Jesus is going to the Father to glory.

He's told them that before. And the way right is not it's not a it's not a turn by turn direction idea. Right?

It's not that. It's not going by boat or by horse or by car or by plane. Right? It's by Jesus. It's through Jesus.

[14 : 56] and it's exclusively by Jesus. Only Jesus. John 14 verse 6 I am the way.

The way is not a method. The way is a person. Jesus. I am the way the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. It doesn't get much more exclusive than that does it?

Jesus is the way the truth the life that's positive right? He is the only way to the Father's house.

He's not saying he is a way to the Father's house. He is saying that he is the only way to the Father's house.

[16 : 00] Jesus is absolutely exclusive. Unless you are following him you are not going to enter God the Father's house.

You are not going to enter the kingdom of heaven. Let me just be specifically clear about this some more. This means that you cannot enter heaven by following Muhammad.

It means you cannot enter heaven by following Buddhist principles. It means you cannot enter heaven through Hinduism.

It means you cannot enter heaven in a way that you would like to imagine it to be. It means you cannot buy your way, work your way, earn your way into heaven, to the Father's house. It means you cannot enter heaven, the Father's house, in any combination of the above. It means you cannot enter heaven any other way than through Jesus.

[17 : 06] It means that Islam is wrong. It means that Buddhism is wrong. It means that Taoism is wrong. It means that Hinduism is wrong.

it means that any other set of beliefs that says you can enter paradise, nirvana, glory, a better place, in any other way, is wrong at best and of the devil at worst.

He is the only way. Any other path is a path to destruction and the pit. Jesus is the truth.

He is not a truth amongst many. Jesus is the life. Jesus has life in himself in chapter 5 verse 26. He is the resurrection and the life in chapter 11 verse 25 raising Lazarus to life from the dead.

He is the giver of life. He is the sustainer of life. He is the author of life. He is the only one who gives eternal life. Jesus is making huge claims of exclusivity.

[18 : 23] And if you don't like it, you've got to ask why. So let's consider some concerns here. It could be out of compassion that you don't like Jesus' exclusive claims.

It could be that you understand the enormous reality that there are millions and millions and millions and millions of people who don't follow Jesus and they're not going to the father's house.

It could be that you have nice family friends who do not follow Jesus and are concerned that if this is true, they're not going to the father's house.

It could mean that someone you love has died and not following Jesus and it's all too late and if this is true, then they're not going to be in the father's house.

I don't like the flip side any more than you. But we've got to see that what Jesus is on about is bigger than human sentiment.

[19 : 30] It's bigger than selling one eternal life insurance policy or another. Jesus is on about bringing honour to the father, to God the father, glory to God the father and the father's desire is bring glory and honour to the son.

And so Jesus goes the way of the cross which is the way, the truth and the way of life and in doing so is crowned with glory and honour.

The way of the father is only by submitting to Jesus Lord. Alright? Well it could be out of consternation you don't like the exclusive claims of Jesus.

You're rebelling against his way. I don't like God saying that he's God and him making the rules. If I were God I'd do things differently. I could do better.

Well really? On how would you do better? Maybe on a ranking of good. Well where's the pass mark?

[20 : 46] 50%? Okay. But what about if I get 49.5%? Surely that's close enough to 50. It's not too far away is it?

Well 49.5% what about 49% good? Oh then you just keep scaling it down don't you? Well if it's not in the past what about we let everybody in?

That'd be fair wouldn't it? God let everybody in. Really? Let everybody in as they are? Even Hitler? Pol Pot? Stalin? Lennon? I don't particularly even want to be in heaven no offence with you like you are right now because you and me would muck it up what about well then let's make it we attain perfection okay so you obtain perfection by an ongoing cycle of your own effort no thanks it makes every cycle hopeless from the start because before I even start I fail and I'm trapped forever outside of the father's house no matter how many cycles of perfection I'd never know how to fix up the mistake

I'd done last time I'd mess it up no I'd be forever outside of heaven okay well I couldn't work out another C word but here is incredulity close people are not like the exclusive claims of Jesus out of unbelief incredibility if you like I don't believe that Jesus is who he is or what he did it's just a story concocted by man this is the straw that breaks camel's back I cannot believe it's true well if you're going to have to believe in Jesus you need to believe everything that Jesus says or don't bother believing at all if we don't believe that Jesus is exclusive way to the father then we dishonor the cross for if there was any other way surely God would have thought it up would know if there's any other way why would

[23 : 44] Jesus submit himself to the agony of going to the cross as he contemplates it it troubled him and troubles him to the core of his very being no there's no other way to the father Jesus the

person is the way the truth and the life and so the disciples actually do know the way to the father for they've been following Jesus for a while now they just don't realise that in following Jesus they were going to the father well Philip asked the question if Jesus the way to the father then show us the father so we can work out whether we want to go and see the father see if we really want to go there oh

Jesus sounds a bit disappointed then he says Philip said to him Lord show us the father that's enough for us and Jesus said to him I've been with you so long you still don't know me Philip whoever has seen me has seen the father how can you say show us the father countless people down the ages have said this I'd believe in God if God would just show himself if there's really a God and he's really a loving God let him show himself and demonstrate himself to us Moses wanted in Exodus chapter 3 and he saw the back of God as he passed by but it's a quest that God is not going to grant because as Jesus says if you've seen Jesus you've seen the father their relationship is so tight John says in John chapter 1 verse 1 the word was with God and the word was God Jesus is

God and yet he's not God the father there's a mutual indwelling of God all the father is so to the son of godness is for the son reveals the father fully and finally we're told in John chapter 1 verse 14 he comes from the father full of grace and truth the son's words are the father's words here in verse 10 of chapter 14 and yet the father is not the son and the son is not the father it's the deep stuff of the trinity going on here and we're going to keep digging further into that in the weeks ahead if you want to see God if you wanted to see God you could have seen God actually you could have if we'd just been born in Palestine about 2000 years ago you could have seen him walking around just you'd been born the wrong time the wrong place in the wrong country but Philip was one of the privileged people who actually met

Jesus and in so doing saw God the son well things now get stakes get raised even higher in verse 12 to 14 Jesus then raised the stakes if someone believes in Jesus not only have they seen the father but listen to this if someone believes in Jesus not only do they know the way to the father have a look at verse 12 have a look at verse 12 truly truly I say to you whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do what greater works than the things that

Jesus has done already could he be talking about for his disciples and down through the ages for us as well what could they be well it can't mean that there were simply more works lots and lots of works and so I do a greater number of works that's not what's on the agenda here it can't mean that I do more supernatural works than Jesus done after all he's raised the dead you can't do much more than raise people from death to life physically in this world can you that's pretty amazing the reason that someone can do greater works than Jesus is that they will live into the new age that's what's going to happen the age of the spirit which is the age we're in now and they will live beyond the time that

[28 : 57] Jesus was living within the flesh after he's gone to the father they will live in the last days the age of the spirit the age we live in now and similar to what was said about John the Baptist in Matthew chapter 11 verse 11 I tell you the truth among those born a woman there's not been risen anyone greater than John the Baptist yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he we are greater than notice that the works we will do will actually be the works that Jesus does when we make requests for him to do them they'll be works that are done when the son is no longer limited by his humanness they'll be the works and the works he will do will actually glorify the father that's what the works will do which will declare how great

God the father is what will be the greater things the greater thing let me tell you it will be seeing people come from living in the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light from being transformed from being objects of wrath to being children in the kingdom of God being rescued from the wrath of God it'll be as we gospel people bring the good news of Jesus and his victory over death sacrifice sins and people saved they are transformed we are transformed people receiving eternal life being rescued from sin and death is something greater that didn't happen while Jesus was walking around on planet earth life and as his gospel empowered by the spirit does its work in and through us in the world as we proclaim the cross we are doing an even greater work than Jesus did while he walked around Palestine that is the ongoing work that we disciples of Jesus continue to engage in that we'll see people that we know who are lost saved wouldn't it be great wouldn't it be great to see thousands and thousands and thousands of people rescued and saved

and following the Lord Jesus Christ and so know the way the truth and the life wouldn't that be wonderful thing to see being rescued from a world of death and destruction that's the kind of thing to be asking

Jesus to do through us that's the kind of work to be praying for but let's remind ourselves again of the exclusive implications of what Jesus is saying there's three implications there's only one way to the Father's house there's only one way to approach the Father and that's through Jesus there's no other way no matter how much we might desire it no other way second there's only one truth not multiple truths when it comes to salvation truth is found in Jesus he's the paradigm of truth he's the embodiment of the revelation of God what he speaks is true what he reveals is true there's not a truth for you and a truth for me there's not my God and your God there's only one true and living God and we know him in knowing Jesus thirdly Jesus is the author of life the giver of life the sustainer of life he is life in himself without

Jesus there's no life without Jesus there's no eternal life now friends if these exclusive claims of Jesus trouble you probably as they should then there's probably two things going on here it might be that we haven't come to terms with Jesus ourselves yet and the way forward is to obey his command and believe believe his word believe he's the Messiah submit to him as Lord and Saviour or for those of us who believe we could be appropriately troubled the appropriate action to take it the most important message of the world that people can ever hear is that Jesus Lord and this is the message that should be on our life and our lips on our hearts and focus our prayers and we can and we should be giving ourselves to a life of growing the gospel self supporting in our spare time or dependent upon others in all our time for

[34 : 49] Jesus has opened the way to heaven through his death on the cross by which the disciples even today we can do greater works than he did let's pray our father in heaven thank you for your life giving word thank you your true and living word and thank you that we know the way of the father for we know the Lord Jesus Christ please help us to be convicted and convinced of these truths as we go about our daily lives and help us to love just as the Lord Jesus Christ has loved we pray in his name amen