



"I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE"

What would you say people are most looking for out of life? Love? Joy? Peace? Hope? Stability? Meaning? Fulfilment? All of the above, probably! But whether we realise it or not, those things can only ultimately be found in God. To be precise, in Jesus. And Jesus made that clear in the things He did, and in the things He said.

Over spring this year, we're going to look at 6 statements in particular – what are often called 'I Am' statements – all from John's Gospel, and these statements are Jesus' way of explaining who He is, and why we need Him.

Today we're going to begin, oddly enough, with the end:

John 14:1-7

Who enjoys travelling here? Me too. But even so, there comes a time when we start to crave home: that place where we truly belong. To quote the late Maya Angelou, "The ache for home lives in all of us, that safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned."

In this passage, Jesus' disciples have been following Him for 3.5 years, and they've come to the conclusion, "This guy is no ordinary Rabbi. He's the Messiah!" And so they're expecting Him to kick out the Romans, make Israel great again, and take over the world. But then, while Jesus is celebrating Passover with them, He drops this bombshell: "I'm going home now. But I'll come back to take you with Me. In fact, you already know the way."

Not surprisingly, they're stunned. And one of them, Thomas, says, "Lord, what are You talking about? We don't even know where You're going, let alone the way to it!"

To which Jesus says these, very famous, words:

"I am the way and the truth and the life."

Or *anokhi had'derekh, v'ha'emet, v'ha'chayim* in His native Hebrew.

What is the point Jesus is making here? That He is:

1) The Way To Follow. We live in a very busy, very full-on world, but I reckon that most people, if they were to slow down long enough to really think about it, would admit that they're looking for 'something more.'

Now most of the world's religions would say that God is that 'something more.' And most of them would claim to be a way to that God – whether it's keeping *mitzvot* in Judaism, the 5 pillars in Islam, or good *karma* in Hinduism. But what Jesus is saying is: "I am the way." Not *a* way, as in one way among many, but *the* way, as in the only one.

Now some people will say, "That's pretty narrow-minded, Steve! This is 2023, not 30AD! You can't say that!" To which my answer is, "Yes. I can." Because 1) Jesus said it, and that's good enough for me; and 2) the alternative doesn't add up. Put all those religions alongside each other, and they're not even describing the same God!

But they also set us up for a fall. Religion says, "You have to be good enough to be there." And left to our own devices, we're not. Which is why we need another way. A better way. And that way is? Jesus of Nazareth.

2) The Truth To Know. When Jesus talks about 'truth' here, what exactly does He mean? Truth in an objective, absolute sense? Truth in some subjective, relativistic, 'each to his own' sense? Or truth of another kind?

One of the things that continues to convince me that Jesus lived and died and did all the incredible stuff the NT describes is the historical evidence. E.g. He's referred to in Roman sources like Josephus; in Greek sources like Lucian of Samosata; and in Jewish sources like the Talmud. In fact, if you were to put the NT to one side and focus merely on those other sources, you would still get a pretty good picture of the kind of person Jesus was.

But ...

Jesus is talking about more than mere historical evidence. He's saying, "If you want to know what God is like, look at Me – because that's who I am." He goes on to say something similar 3 verses later: "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." In fact, when Jesus makes these 'I Am' statements, He's mirroring what God says in the OT (particularly in the book of Isaiah, where there are no less than 14 'I Am' statements in chs40-50 alone).

So Jesus is talking about a personal relationship, with God Himself. It's the difference between reading my bio on Facebook and claiming to 'know' me, compared to Kellie who's had 25 years of being married to my madness.

There's no contest!

3) The Life To Live. Not just your threescore-years-and-ten, or floating on a cloud twanging on a harp forevermore. Jesus is talking about a life lived to the full – and one that will never end.

Now there are lots of things that can enslave us and keep us from living that life: guilt over things we wish we'd never done; fear of death and all the things that go with it; habits and addictions that can grip us for years. But Jesus came to set us free – from everything that binds us.

How did He do it? By dying on a cross. The Bible says God loves us all so much He came to us in the person of Jesus, to live with us, and die for us. And on the cross Jesus took everything we have ever done wrong, said wrong, thought wrong, and died for it, in our place.

No matter who we are. No matter where we come from.

Now that would be amazing enough, but 3 days later ... His tomb was empty. And because of that, we can know that we have a hope and a future beyond all this. And He also promised to be with us, by His Spirit, to help us become the people we couldn't be otherwise.

That's what Jesus means when He talks about life!

Heading Home

Jesus rounds things off with, "No-one comes to the Father – except through Me" (in case you still needed convincing).

Reality is: we have all wandered – from our spiritual home. From the God who made us, the God who knows us, and the God who loves us enough He came to earth to save us. And we need to return to Him.

Tomas a Kempis, the medieval mystic, put it this way:

"Follow thou Me. I am the way, and the truth, and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living."

And Jesus is it.

So, have you taken the way that only He can offer? Have you experienced the truth of who He really is? Are you living the life that comes from knowing Jesus?

He is the spiritual sat-nav we need to get us home.