

Study notes to accompany Sermon *'I am the Way, the truth and the Life...'* 13th December 2009

Welcome

Share in pairs what do you turn to when you are lost on a journey?

- A map
- Your sat nav
- Ask someone....

Word

The last in our *'I am....'* series points back to a fundamental feature of John in that the gospel is all about a **relationship** with Jesus. (cf John 20 v31)

Jesus answered 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life'.

John 14 v6

So often we seek to find our own way rather than seek and trust and believe in him. As a person who tends to turn to maps myself I know the danger of trying to sort out my life myself rather than asking someone who can help.

Notice first that this 'I am saying' is spoken to an individual.

Jesus answered.....

The only other I am saying that is directed to an individual was to Martha when Jesus said *'I am the Resurrection and the Life...'* John 11 v35

On this occasion Jesus is responding to Thomas who claimed he did not know where Jesus is 'going' so how could he know the way? (v5). The setting is that of just before the Passover Feast (13 v1) and during the evening Jesus has

- washed the disciples feet 13 v2-17
- predicted his betrayal by Judas who has since left, 13 v18-30
- predicted Peter's denial 13 v31-38
- and now told them he is going away from them and they cannot immediately follow 14 v1-5

Thomas as always appears to state the obvious. He seems high on '**Sensing**' (Myres Briggs Personality type testing term) as he understands the world in concrete terms, through what he can see, hear, taste, touch and feel. Famously not able to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he had seen the nail marks in Jesus hands and physically put his hand into his side John 20v25.

Thomas did not understand the destination to where Jesus said he was going. That Jesus was going is clear and they cannot immediately follow.

Where I am going, you cannot come 13 v33

Simon Peter had asked him directly where he was going and Jesus does not give a direct answer but repeats the assertion that he is going and this time adds

you cannot follow now, but you will follow later... v36

If Thomas had been listening Jesus does begin to tell them where he is going.

*In my Father's house are many rooms;
if it were not so I would have told you.
I am going there to prepare a place for you.*

John 14 v2

Jesus had come from the Father and made his dwelling here on earth as John makes clear in his wonderful prologue

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (pitched his tent) among us.
We have seen his glory,
the glory of the One and Only,
who came from the Father full of grace and truth.*

John 1 v14

He came from the Father and now he is going (back) to the Father.

Application

Perhaps we are sometimes like Thomas, wanting clear factual direction from God with the way forward clearly mapped out so we can understand every detail, every twist in the way forward. Perhaps we want an audible voice to speak to us like with a Sat Nav 'turn right here, take the next turning, ...'. One of the issues that Thomas appears to have is that of believing and trusting in what he is told by others. He appears to want to work it out for himself.

In what ways are you sometimes tempted to want to work everything out either for yourself? Others appear to want God to speak in an audible voice telling them precisely what to do in every circumstance. Once more in what ways are you sometimes tempted to want God or God through others tell you exactly what to do?

Jesus answered 'I am the Way.....'

We have not got time to look at all three aspects of this I am saying and will leave the truth and the life to another time.

One possible rendering of this verse suggests that 'The Way' is the particular focus of Jesus 'I am the way (to the Father) in that I am the truth and the life' (cf NIV Study Bible notes).

Jesus often calls God 'Father' in John and claims to be in a **special relationship** to him.

- in his conversation with the Samaritan Woman by the well
*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father
in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.*

John 4 v23

- Jesus claim for God to be his Father is understood to be more than was customary according to the religious authorities of the day

*Jesus was healing on the Sabbath and said
My Father is always at his work, to this very day, and I too am working.*

John comments

*For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him,
not only was he breaking the Sabbath,
but he was even calling God his own Father,
making himself equal with God.*

John 5 v16-17

All these 'I am' sayings have been connected with the progressive revelation as to Jesus true identity. According to John the whole purpose in writing the gospel is so that we his readers might believe that

*Jesus
is the Christ (the anointed one; the Messiah),
the Son of God.*

John 20 v31

(I can't find any reference to Jesus using the title 'Son of God' directly about himself as he sometimes uses Son of Man which is slightly more ambiguous.)

However he makes it clear that **his relationship with the Father is close** as he is

- sent by the Father,
- loved by the Father (5v20),
- entrusted by the Father with his mission and authority to forgive sins, heal the sick and give life to those who have been given to the Son, the ones who believe in him.

What follows this saying further emphasises this special relationship with the Father (14 v9-11)

John understood the importance of the relationship between Jesus and God as Father and places this whole Passover discourse in the context of Jesus going to the Father.

It was just before the Passover Feast.

Jesus knew that his time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

John 13 v1

Jesus is now going back to the Father but as a famous comedian once said 'There's more...!'

He is going back to the Father to prepare a place for us! Right now he is hovering in heaven getting your room ready!

In my Father's house are many rooms...

I am going there to prepare a place for you....

John 14 v2

The context suggests something that is permanent unlike his time on earth. *Rooms* = dwelling places. It's time for Jesus to leave and one day it will be time for us to leave too.

Now the *mansion* (John 14 v2 AV) or *Father's house* could be interpreted to be the temple as we know from Luke this is what Jesus calls the temple

Why were you searching for me?

'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house'

Luke 2 v49

Similarly when Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple John records him as saying

Get these out of here!

How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!

John 2 v16

Now the Temple was the place where they thought that heaven and earth meet, what the Celts would call 'a *thin place*.' But it is not just **a place** for the Jews where this happens it is **the place**. As the argument with the Samaritan woman showed where God was worshiped, where his presence was personified was thought to be only in the Temple.

Jesus is now saying that there will be **a new home**, a new place where God's presence is, a new sense of heaven and earth would meet. But we need to note that there was **only one place** where true worship could be offered, **only one God** who is Lord of all and now Jesus is claiming not that he is **a way** to knowing this Father but he is **the way** of coming home to God the Father.

It is in relationship to him, a special relationship that means that we too are regarded as sons and daughters of God.

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God...*

John 1 v12

Our access to heaven is not through observing the right form of worship in the right place nor through seeking to please God by right behaviour and fulfilling all his commands. These are the 'ways' of other faiths. Rather Jesus is **the Way** into this access to the Father.

Application

In what other ways do we sometimes try to gain access to God and win his favour rather than simply believing in Jesus and trusting him? Do we seek to do this through good works, religious behaviour or particular forms of worship? In what ways do you know that you are in a special relationship to Father God? Perhaps share times when you have simply had to out your hand in his like a child would reach up to hold their Father's hand to guide them.

Conclusion

One day we will be taken to be with Jesus and be in that new Jerusalem where a new heaven and a new earth meet. (Rev 21 v1) Until then we live **'the Way'**, we demonstrate how to live as sons and daughters of God who are in a special relationship to the Father just as Jesus has done.

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13 v15

This example is a life of serving others, not lording it over others, nor being arrogant towards others. In the early church the followers of Jesus were known as people of **'The Way'** such was the distinctiveness of their lifestyles from the surrounding culture.

Paul was on the road to Damascus

*so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way,
whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem*

Acts 9 v2

*But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the **Way***

Acts 19 v9

*About that time there arose a great disturbance about the **Way**.*

Acts 19 v23

*I persecuted the followers of this **Way** to their death,
arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison*

Acts 22 v4

*However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the **Way**, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets*

Acts 24 v14

*Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the **Way**, adjourned the proceedings.*

Acts 24 v22

Witness

In what practical ways can you show as an individual and as a group that you are living lives of serving others first? Perhaps as a group you can discuss some action you could take collectively one week that would help others rather than meeting for study or your own benefit. Perhaps you could give one week up a term to have a meal and invite those in some kind of need around for no other reason than to give them a night out a break and cook for them?

We not only need to know the Way we also need to live 'the Way'