

JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE
Sermon for the 8th Sunday after Pentecost, 2017
John 14:1-8

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 14:1-8: ¹ **“Let not your hearts be troubled! Believe in God and believe in Me! ² In My Father’s house there are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you, because I am going to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go to prepare a place for you, I shall also come again and take you to be with Me, so that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to where I am going.”**

⁵ Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. ⁷ If you have known Me, you will know My Father also; and from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

⁸ Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father! Then that is enough for us.”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Word of God says that there are two paths in life: the way of life and the way of death. The way of life is travelled only by faith in one individual, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. To believe in any other God than the one triune God, to trust in any other Saviour than the only Son of God, Jesus Christ, is to travel *the wrong way* in life. Jesus says very clearly, **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**

This teaching is exclusive. What a contrast to the popular teaching that says all religions reach God, but just follow different paths. This is not what God teaches. No, He teaches that there are no other paths. **“No one”** comes to the Father except through Jesus. Anyone ever lost in a forest or other wilderness knows that taking

the wrong path makes a person even more hopelessly lost. So it is with the spiritually lost. Only one way leads to safety, to salvation, and that is Jesus.

Jesus' way to the Father is the way of God's will (the way of grace), not the way of our human will (the way of works). The problem is of course that our sinful nature wants to get us to the Father *our way*, not God's way. It is in our sinful nature to think that we can earn our way to God because we're "pretty good." Well, at least we aren't as bad as those people who don't even believe in God! we might think. And sadly, many Christians have even said something like, "*I know God is blessing me because I've been a faithful member of the church for many years. I've served on boards, committees, ushered, visited the sick, done this or that job for the church, and so on. My future is secure.*" By nature, we are all selfish, and self-centred. To us there is nothing more important than the capital "I". "I did this," we like to gloat.

That is not the way to salvation at all. Living by that will of ours leads us away from the Father and His one true way of salvation. In fact, we all sin in word, thought, and deed every single day. Looking inward to ourselves and our righteousness does not lead us to God at all, for God demands total perfection.

To understand the one way of salvation, we need to understand God the Father's will, and His will is for all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.¹ God does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.² What is more, the Lord's forgiveness totally obliterates past offenses, so that He doesn't remember them anymore. In the words of the prophet Micah, He "*treads our sins underfoot*" and "*hurls all our iniquities into the depths of the sea,*" (7:19). He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but is pleased when they turn from their ways and live.³

Since, because of our sinful human nature, we could not do God's will perfectly, God sent His one and only Son to do the Father's will for us. The Father's will is the way of salvation by grace through faith in Christ - the only way of redemption. When Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin to be questioned after

¹ 1 Timothy 2:4

² 2 Peter 3:9

³ Ezekiel 18:23

Peter had healed a lame beggar, and had proceeded to teach about repentance in the name of the risen Jesus, they boldly proclaimed that “*salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved,*” (Acts 4:12). The words “*we must be saved*” remind us that the living God is committed to this salvation in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Martin Luther once commented on showing the way of God’s will by saying, “*If we want to feel assured of reaching heaven, we must have a sure way and road to travel; for there can be no more than one right way and road. And such a way is indicated only in God’s Word. Christ the Lord Himself is the only Way and the right Road on which our heart can and must rely and depend. Therefore Christ concludes: ‘He who would be safe and not meet eternal loss and ruin, let him give ear to Me alone’ and let Me impress these words deeply: ‘I am the Way.’*”⁴

Jesus’ way to the Father is the way of humility, the way of suffering on the cross, not the way of pride that thinks it doesn’t need Jesus’ cross. This is the complete opposite to our way. Our way is the way of pride. The same thinking that says we’re good enough to earn our way to heaven is the way of pride, keeping some of the credit for my salvation for myself, denying God the credit. Even as Christians, our pride causes us to concentrate on ourselves - my mission, what I think God wants me to do, rather than the mission of our God and Saviour.

Again from Luther, he illustrates this well: “*Yet the world... will try, and rely on, any method or any work suggested to it. But there is one thing it cannot do, namely, remain on this one safe way with firm and steadfast faith. And though it hears and is told that Christ is the Way, it adulterates this message and seeks bypaths and other ways. It does not let Him have the exclusive honour; and it usurps part of this for itself, as though it could contribute something and find the way to heaven by itself.*”⁵

The truth about the way of humility is the way of the cross. That humble way is seen in Gethsemane. The prayer of Jesus, “*Father, not My will, but Yours be done,*” should be ours. Christ submitted to the will of the Father and went the way of the cross.

⁴ Luther’s Works, 24:39.

⁵ Luther’s Works, 24:40.

Jesus' way to the Father is the way of death that gives life, not the way of "life" that brings death. Sinful human beings reject God's way of death and follow a way of life that leads to death.

Our text is part of the dialogue Jesus had with His disciples after He had just washed their feet, and had foretold His betrayal into the hands of men, and Peter's future denial. The disciples were troubled at Jesus going the way of death. ¹ **"Let not your hearts be troubled!"** He told them. He had to tell them this because they had wanted a powerful Jesus, not a dying one. They wanted power and the glory of the Father rather than suffering and death for themselves. ⁸ **Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father! Then that is enough for us."**

We too, often want our faith to bring us admiration and successes, rather than rejection and hurts. Imagine if our church pews were full as a result of our efforts in evangelising! Instead, no one can deny that our church membership is only a shadow of what it used to be. Yes, many of our members have entered eternal life, but many have also fallen by the wayside, letting their faith dwindle to the point of extinction, and no amount of encouragement or praying to the heavenly Father seems to be bringing them back. We often have our hands full trying to keep the members we have now, without putting in time chasing up the slack, or the erring. But it's not only our church. Many faithful Christians of different denominations have that aching desire for all people to turn to the Lord, but the problem is, with the best intentions, a lot of churches will look toward programs and other ways to build up the church, seeking out gimmicks and other novelties to turn people to Christ, rather than preach Christ and Him crucified. They will preach all about love and won't mention God's Law even once. They will teach that we have the ability to save ourselves. It almost seems at times that churches are too embarrassed to preach about the humility, the death and resurrection of Christ, and would rather focus on man's efforts. And of course, it doesn't help either when mainstream media today is hostile toward Christianity, heaping all the different denominations into the one basket in their endeavour to give Christ and His followers a bad name.

Yet it is the teaching of Christ's death and resurrection that builds and sustains the Christian Church. He gathers people around Word and Sacrament to hear God's Law and Gospel, to receive forgiveness of sins, and to receive the strength

to endure in a hostile world. The death and resurrection of Christ must be taught, and it is absolutely true that those churches who wish to remain faithful to the Scriptures, who want to stand on Christ alone as the only way to heaven, will suffer for it. Jesus says, **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”** This must be an unmovable teaching of the true Christian Church.

Jesus went the way of the cross to bring life out of death. Jesus’ showing off His power and showing the Father’s glory couldn’t save us, but His death on the cross did. Therefore, we do have life and all its benefits: here and now the Father’s providing and the comfort of Christ’s presence when we suffer, then one day the mansion Christ has prepared for us, for He is coming back. ² **In My Father’s house there are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you, because I am going to prepare a place for you.** ³ **If I go to prepare a place for you, I shall also come again and take you to be with Me, so that you also may be where I am.”**

Jesus calmed the fear of the disciples. He encouraged them to continue to believe in God and in His Son - to believe and live. For those who believe, God’s promise is eternal. Jesus was on the road to glory, for Himself and for us.

Christ is the only way to heaven. His life, death, and resurrection have won salvation for sinners. Believing that truth brings life for eternity. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Most holy and eternal God, You rule over all, and have given us victory over all our enemies. We come before You with humble hearts to praise You.

We thank You that You so richly supply the world with daily bread, that You fill the earth with untold resources, that You give every seed the miracle of growth, and send the rain to make fruitful the efforts of those who farm the soil. But, above all else, we thank You for that great love that has satisfied the hunger of our souls by sending from heaven the bread of life, Jesus Christ Your Son. Grant that we may believe in Him with all our hearts, and find joy and satisfaction in Him alone. Help us each day to turn to Him who was wounded because of our sins, and bruised because of our iniquities, so that by His punishment we may be cleansed,

healed, and forgiven, and may know in Him the joy of unbroken fellowship with You.

Gracious God, You know that we are weak and sinful. Give us the strength that we do not have of ourselves. Fill us with faith, hope, and love, so that we may live as Your children and enjoy life in all its fullness. Give us the power to stand firm in the spiritual battles of this life, the resolve to be Your true and loyal servants, and the ability to conquer our sins and to live in righteousness.

Bless Your Church, O God. Supply it with pastors who pray without ceasing, proclaim Your Word with boldness, call people to repentance and faith, and prepare them for the final coming of Jesus our Saviour and judge. Give all of us opportunities to speak the Gospel to others, and grant that we may do it with certainty and conviction, with a sense of urgency, and with genuine love for people's bodily and spiritual welfare.

We thank You for the many mercies You have shown to our country. Strengthen all forces of righteousness in our midst, and overthrow all the powers of evil. Teach us to trust in You, for You alone help and protect us.

Bless our homes with Your continual presence and help. Put Your Word in the hearts of children, and Your love in the lives of parents, so that they may all enjoy the bread of life for ever.

Deal mercifully with those among us who are suffering, bereaved, lonely, and depressed. Free them from their troubles, and bind them to You, that they may know the security of Your presence, and live to serve and praise You.

All these things we ask in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 7:6-9

⁶ "For you are a people that is holy to the LORD, your God. The LORD, your God, has chosen you out of all the other peoples on the surface of the earth to be a people that is His

personal property. ⁷ The LORD has not chosen you because you had been more numerous than all the other nations. For you were the smallest of all the nations. ⁸ Rather, because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that He had made with your forefathers, the

LORD brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from slave-quarters, from the power of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.⁹ Therefore you shall know that the LORD, your God, is God, the faithful God, who keeps His Covenant and His mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and who keep His Commandments!”

Romans 8:28-39

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, for those whom He has called according to His purpose.²⁹ For He also predestined those whom He had foreknown, to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, so that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ He also called those whom He had predestined. He also justified those whom He had called, and He also glorified those whom He had justified.

³¹ Therefore what shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² How will He not, who did not spare His own Son, but handed Him over for us all, along with Him, also freely give us all things?³³ Who will accuse those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.³⁴ Who will

condemn? Christ Jesus, who died, and, more than that, has been raised, is the One who is even at the right hand of God, who is also interceding for us.

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁶ As Scripture has said: “For Your sake we are being killed all day long. We have been considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor present circumstances nor future circumstances, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:44-52

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and, because he was glad, he went and sold everything that he had, and bought that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dealer looking for fine pearls.

⁴⁶ When he found one very expensive pearl, he went away and

sold everything that he had, and bought it.

⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was thrown into the sea and gathered all kinds of fish.

⁴⁸ When it was full, they pulled it up onto the shore, sat down, and collected the good ones into containers, but they threw the bad ones away. ⁴⁹ It will be like that at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate wicked people from righteous people ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace. There they will weep and grind their teeth.

⁵¹ Have you understood all these things?”

They answered, “Yes.”

⁵² He told them, “Therefore, every scribe who has been instructed for the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings new and old things out of his treasure.”