

John 14:1-7 I am the way, the truth and the life

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We live in troubling times.

Wars, a pandemic and record breaking floods all at the same time.

I spoke to a woman this week who told me that she's turned off the news.

It affects her emotionally to listen to it.

She can't change anything about it.

So she's not going to listen to it.

Jesus' disciples were troubled in the passage we are looking at today.

Jesus had told them that he was leaving them.

He'd told them three times that he was going to die.

They didn't really get it.

But they were troubled.

Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

We might think, if our hearts are troubled, they are troubled.

There's nothing much we can do about it.

But Jesus thinks we can do something about it.

This is what you can do about it.

"You believe in God,
believe also in me."

That's the cure for a troubled heart.

But it begs a question.

Believe in him for what?

The most famous verse in the Bible says,

"For God so loved the world,

that he gave his one and only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him

shall not perish but have eternal life."

It says whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What are we called upon to believe in Jesus for?

The first thing

is that Jesus has the power to give us the gift of eternal life.
Jesus says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms ...
I’m going there to prepare a place for you.”
Heaven has got plenty of room,
Jesus says.
And I’m coming back to take you to be with me.
If you’re a follower of Jesus,
you’ve got to trust that he has the power to give you eternal life.
I don’t think you could say you have faith in Jesus,
unless you believe that he will give you eternal life.
But there’s more.

This saying of Jesus to his disciples,
“You believe in God, believe also in me.”
didn’t come in a vacuum.
It was part of a longer conversation.
The thrust of it is that Jesus has told his disciples he’s leaving them.
And his disciples are upset.
They feel abandoned.
I’m not sure if you’ve ever been left in the lurch.
You probably know someone who’s had a partner leave them.
Or even when someone dies –
it’s irrational,
but you can feel annoyed at them for leaving you to cope without them.
Well that’s how Jesus’ disciples feel.
We’re honoured that you want us to teach the people
to obey everything you have taught them Jesus
but actually we’d rather you stayed with us.
That’s why the first thing Jesus says to his disciples is,
“Do not let your hearts be troubled.”
They’re worried sick about Jesus leaving.
But you can trust in Jesus.
People leave for all sorts of reasons.
It might be bad faith on their part.
It might be circumstances beyond their control.

But there's only one reason Jesus leaves –
and that's when it's for your good.

There was a very good reason that Jesus couldn't stay with his disciples.
When you read through the gospels,
you realise that Jesus' disciples didn't get it.

Their misunderstandings of what he taught were almost comical.
And that's not because they were thick.

When you read the gospel written by John and the letters written by
Peter and John,

you realise that Jesus' disciples were intelligent blokes.

But while they were walking around with Jesus,
they didn't get it.

The reason is because you can't understand the things of God
without the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart.

And until Jesus went back to heaven,
the Holy Spirit was not given to Jesus followers.

That's what the day of Pentecost was all about.

So Jesus wasn't leaving his disciples in the lurch without him.

He was actually going so they could have access to someone else –
someone who would empower them to serve God
in a new and better way.

So that's the second thing you can trust Jesus for.

You can trust Jesus not to let you down or leave you in the lurch.

And you can trust him to give you the gift of eternal life
if you follow him.

There's a third thing you can trust Jesus for.

It comes from that phrase in verse 2,

“If it were not so,

would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you?”

By that, Jesus means,

‘If there wasn't enough room in my Father's house for all of you,

I wouldn't have had you guys trailing round the countryside after me
for the last three years,

I would have already told you.’

In other words, Jesus won't lead you on.

He will tell you the hard things up front.

There are no hidden catches later on.

Jesus did that in his ministry.

When a rich man who worshiped his money wanted to follow Jesus,

Jesus didn't let him follow for six months

and then tell him,

“Oh and by the way,

we need to do something about the fact that you worship your money.”

He told him up front.

“Give away everything you have,

and then come and follow me.”

It's the same for us.

Jesus tells us up front what the costs of being one of his followers is.

And the cost is significant.

We must live our lives in obedience to his commands.

Our lives are to be given over to him.

But it's all up front.

His disciples left everything to follow Jesus from the beginning.

There were no hidden catches.

I hate hidden catches.

I've become very suspicious of anyone trying to sell me something,

because the advertising and marketing industry has become so clever

at only telling you the good stuff,

the stuff they want you to hear.

You find out the catch later.

Spin has become such a part of our communal life,

that people employ spin doctors to make sure they are getting the right

message out.

Forget about the reality.

It's just about the message.

With Jesus, the message equals the reality.

There's no spin.

You can trust Jesus.

He won't lead you on.

And he won't leave you in the lurch.
And he will give eternal life to his followers.
You can trust Jesus.

I like riding my bike.

There are a couple of reasons you could ride a bike.

You could have somewhere you wanted to go,
like when I used to ride my bike from Sandringham to Melbourne Uni,
or you could just enjoy the ride itself,
like when I go for a ride these days.

Is it the destination or is it the journey?

Jesus says,

“My Father's house has many rooms;
if that were not so,
would I have told you,
that I am going there to prepare a place for you?”

When Jesus says,

“I'm going there to prepare a place for you,”

Is it the destination or the journey?

What prepares a place for us in heaven?

It's not that Jesus is going to make the beds
in his Father's house or something.

Jesus is leaving his disciples by the way of the cross.

Jesus is going to be crucified,

and then he's going to rise from the dead,

and then he's going to ascend into heaven.

And it's this process of going that prepares a place for us in heaven.

If it were not for Jesus' dying on the cross,

there could be no place for us in heaven.

Impure people don't belong in a pure place like heaven.

It's only through Jesus dying on the cross,

that we can be washed clean from our impurities.

His leaving his disciples

is what prepares a place for us in heaven.

Jesus had explained all that to them before.
That's why he said to them,
"You know the way to the place where I am going."
You know what way I have to go.
You know I need to suffer
at the hands of the chief priest and the Pharisees
to be crucified and on the third day to rise again.
I've told you that before.
You know the way to the place where I am going.

Well not surprisingly,
because they hadn't yet been given the Holy Spirit,
because Jesus hadn't yet gone,
Jesus disciples didn't get it.
Thomas says,
"We don't know where you are going.
So how can we know the way?"
Thomas' question is not about the way Jesus will go.
Thomas is interested in how he will get there himself.
So Jesus doesn't answer in terms of the way of the cross
that he must travel.
Jesus answers the question about how a person like Thomas
can find their way to heaven.
And you and me, we're like Thomas.
Jesus answered,
"I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."
That's one of the most deep and most important things
that Jesus ever said.
"I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."

There's great paradox in Jesus' words.
Jesus says I am the way to heaven
but he was about to go the way of an executed criminal.

Jesus says I am the truth
but he was about to be condemned as a lying witness.
Jesus says I am the life
but he was about to be lead out to die.
Not everything is as it seems.
God doesn't have a PR department.
He doesn't employ spin doctors.
And with the eyes of this world,
it's not possible to see that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.
It takes the eyes of faith.
It takes eyes enlivened by the Holy Spirit.
The power of God is in the reality not the appearance.
Even Jesus own disciples wouldn't have understood what he was saying
at the time –
and everyone else
would have found his claims laughable or blasphemous.
But by the power of God,
Jesus words have been shown to be true.
And countless millions of people from around the world
can testify to the power of Jesus Christ- the way, the truth and the life –
who has transformed their lives.

Recognise the enormity of Jesus' claim.
He doesn't say I know the way.
He says I am the way.
Don't come to Jesus
and ask him the way to happiness or enlightenment –
like he is some sort of Guru.
Come to Jesus and find in him true joy in God.
He himself is the way.
Jesus doesn't say I know the truth.
He says I am the truth.
Don't come to Jesus and ask him what is true.
Come to him and find someone who is perfectly true –
someone who is perfectly faithful –

someone you can completely rely on.
There lots of fake news out there at the moment.
People aren't sure that they can trust what they are told to be the truth.
I was talking to a lady this week,
a different one to the one I mentioned earlier.
And this lady told me
that she doesn't trust the news to tell her the truth anymore.
How can she know
if what they are saying about what is happening in the Ukraine is true?
It's a good question.
One thing we do know is that malicious people are out to deceive us.
In this kind of an environment,
to know Jesus who is the truth is a great comfort.
I don't even need to be able to sift fact from fiction.
I can just hold on to Jesus.
He is the truth.
Jesus doesn't say I know the path to life.
Jesus says I am the life.
He is the source of life.
In John chapter 5 Jesus says that he has life in himself.
He has the power to make alive.
We talk about someone being in a very powerful position
if they have the power of life and death.
And we think of doctors and judges and generals and rulers.
One decision from them can mean the difference between life and death.
But those people really only have the power to continue life or to end it.
None of them can give life where none exists in the first place.
In Jesus' language, they don't have life in themselves.
But Jesus does.
Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

And then the most stunning claim of all.
No one comes to the Father except through me.
This life is just a preparation for the life to come.
The predominant philosophy today is,

“The one who dies with the most toys wins.”

Dying with the most toys gets you nothing.

Waste of time.

Even enjoyable wholesome mind broadening experiences –
once they’re over, they’re over.

I've seen Uluru,

I've seen the Daintree.

I've been to Mexico, Austria, Fiji and Italy.

But once it’s over, it’s over.

You can’t bring it home with you.

And even if you could,

it wouldn’t stop you getting old or dying.

The most important thing in this life

is to come into relationship with God the Father.

Because that will last forever.

And Jesus says,

No one comes to the Father except through me.

As politically incorrect as it sounds,

that means that there is no eternal life available

in non Christian religions.

It means that there is no eternal life by trusting in your own goodness.

Even I would suggest,

there is no eternal salvation in paying lip service to Jesus,

but actually living your life by the philosophy

that the one who dies with the most toys wins.

Maybe that’s too male an image to impact half of you.

There’s no eternal salvation in paying lip service to Jesus,

but actually living your life by the philosophy

that the one who dies

with the most photographs of grandchildren on their mantle piece wins.

There is only eternal salvation

through becoming a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

"No one comes to the Father except through me."

I'm very grateful for all the mind broadening experiences I've had.

Don't get me wrong,

I'm very thankful to have had the opportunity to explore and discover some of God's beautiful creation.

But it can't be the top priority.

There's eternity to consider.

And given that I'm filled with confidence

that Jesus has secured my eternity,

my priority needs to be helping others come into relationship with the one who is the way the truth and the life.

Let me to invite you to consider your priorities.

Jesus won't leave you in the lurch or let you down

if you make him number 1.