

The Only Way

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[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 12th of March 2000. The preacher is Phil Muleman.

His sermon is entitled The Only Way and is from John chapter 13 verse 36 through to chapter 14 verse 14.

Our Heavenly Father we pray that you open our hearts and our minds to help us understand your word, to believe it and to live it out in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Please open your Bibles to page 877 as we look at John, these verses from John's Gospel chapter 13 verses 36 through to the end of 14 verse 14.

And for those who might be visiting today, we are going through John's Gospel through till Easter and we're up to this stage of the Gospel. Well my father used to work and, well he used to work, he used to travel a lot for work as well overseas.

[1 : 1 1] And I often thought it would be worthwhile going with him to see all the parts of the worlds that he visited. After all he visited some many interesting places. But he would tell me that I couldn't go because he would be working all the time and besides he would come back.

And he would also add to that that Australia was probably the best place to visit and to live. And that's why we live here I guess. Well in the same way that dad used to go away, Jesus in this morning's passage talks about going away to a place his disciples cannot follow at this moment.

And they've spent the best part of three years together and now in reply to Peter's question verse 36 he says, Lord where are you going?

Jesus' answer is where I am going. You cannot follow now. But you will follow afterward. It's like a game of follow the leader is going on.

And this game of follow the leader has ended but the participants want to continue on in the game. You know what children are like when a game ends they want to continue on. But the leader's stopped what's going on here.

[2 : 3 1] Well do these disciples understand what is about to become of Jesus? In a sense they do. Peter here we discover has some idea that what Jesus is talking about could lead to death.

If he didn't then he would not have said in verse 37, I will lay down my life for you. He knows that from following Jesus there is some risk involved in the process even to the point of death.

That's one thing that he has at least learnt over those few years. But he doesn't understand why he cannot follow now. Why can't he go to where Jesus is going now?

And that's something that Peter will eventually understand but it will be later. But there are two reasons that we see now why he cannot follow Jesus. The first one is that it's not time for Peter to die.

That will follow later. If you look at the end of John's Gospel in 21, chapter 21 verses 18 and 19 talks about how Peter will die eventually.

[3 : 40] But right now it's not time for him to die. It's not in God's perfect plan for him to leave. And that reason is because, and the second reason is, the hour has come now for Jesus to die.

Remember we go through John's Gospel and the hour has not come. In chapter 12 I think it is the hour has come. And that hour is getting closer and closer. The hour has come for Jesus to die.

The hour has come for this Lamb of God, Jesus, to be glorified. And the only way for that to occur is by Jesus offering the one and only true sacrifice that deals with the world's sin.

And that is himself hanging on a cross. It's not time for Peter to die. That's why he cannot follow. Because where Jesus is going, no one can follow.

Not even his closest followers. Now Peter's ignorance of the work that Jesus is going to do by his death is highlighted in these verses. And his words are verse 37 which says, I will lay down my life for you.

[4 : 55] I will lay down my life for you, Jesus. They're full of irony. Jesus, no doubt seeing this, says, Will you, Peter?

Will you lay down your life for me? Who after all is laying down his life for whom here in this passage? If you recall back in chapter 10, Jesus has said that he is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

I think Peter here has spoken more than he knows. He couldn't lay down his life for Jesus then. No one could ever lay down his life for Jesus in the way that Jesus is laying down his life.

But, as I said a moment ago, Peter would lay down his life about 30 years later and bring glory to God in doing so.

Now here, I think we see Peter's humanity and Jesus' divinity. And that's seen in verse 38. He says, Very truly I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

[6 : 10] Peter has spoken more than he knows. Jesus speaks what he knows to be the truth because he is divine as well as fully human.

Peter is human. And his full humanity will be seen in just hours when he denies any knowledge of Jesus at all.

Three times. Peter's boast that he would never deny his Lord, even to the point of death, is indicative of our human need, I think, for independence.

We say things without counting the cost in order to get what we want for our own selfish gain. Look at the greed and the selfishness, for example, in the sporting arena. We see there are people taking performance-enhancing drugs to get to the top.

And really, it's a disgraceful practice that's going on. We see the selfishness of humans in that one particular area. But look at our own lives.

[7 : 16] What things have we done in order to get what we want? Friends, this is all sin. And that is the reason for Jesus.

That's the reason why Jesus, God's sinless son, gave up his life in order that those who turn to him may live. And it's for this reason that Jesus said that no one can follow him just now.

But because he goes to lay down his life, they will be able to follow afterward. But we see here at the beginning of chapter 14, verse 1, they're troubled.

These disciples are troubled. Now, you would think that they would need and want to provide Jesus with some emotional and spiritual support in his time of need.

I mean, Jesus has already stated in chapter 12, verse 27, that he is troubled. And I would be too, knowing what's about to come of him.

[8 : 23] But now, here he is with all the things that he's about to face, having to offer some comfort and support to his closest followers who are troubled.

Why are they troubled? Why are Jesus' disciples troubled? Well, the context of this passage this morning is really of a whole situation in a sense which is quite bizarre because there's been quite a number of things revealed to these disciples in the recent past.

The first thing that's happened is that Judas Iscariot has left the group because Jesus has predicted that he will betray him.

So Judas has gone off to do his work. Now, I don't know whether the disciples knew whether or not he was going to go and betray him or not. That's irrelevant. But Judas, who has been with him for a number of years, has left the group.

So that could be a reason for their source of trouble. The second reason for their source of trouble could be that they have heard Jesus foretell Peter's denial. Perhaps they were there when Jesus told it and they thought, if Peter can't stand the test, if Peter can't stand the test, what hope have I got?

[9 : 39] Well, that could be another reason for their source of trouble. Well, I think the most obvious reason for their source of trouble is that Jesus, in this context, is about to leave them.

And their whole world following this Jesus has been so wrapped up in these last few years of following Jesus. Now, Jesus, if you think about it, he has asked them to invest their future in him and now he tells them he is leaving.

One commentator says that emotionally they can only contemplate the loss of Jesus like a child contemplates the loss of its parents. They think of Jesus as Messiah, that is, God's chosen one.

They haven't got any problems with that. But as the Messiah, they think of him as the Messiah who will stay with them and bring in and usher in God's glorious kingdom in a warrior-like manner.

So this future, without Jesus, comes as a shattering prospect despite his attempts to prepare them for this occasion that he is leaving.

[10 : 59] So then, what is the answer to their troubled hearts? Verse 1 of chapter 14. Believe in God, or believe or trust in God.

Believe or trust also in me. They're the words that Jesus says. Believe in God. Believe also in me. Now the other night at school council, which I'm a member of, at our kids' school, we were talking about how we would present our AGM report this year, which is coming up at the end of this month.

And we were brainstorming some ideas and I happened to mention something that I thought would be helpful. And the people present, they're never convinced by anything I said, but they weren't convinced about what I said to them.

just then. And so I said to them, trust me, I'm an Anglican minister. Why do you laugh? What I said, I don't think installed any greater trust or confidence in me, but it was worth a try.

On Friday, I was at our, Barb and I were at our accountants and Judy walked in to our conversation. I saw her outside and wherever we go these days, you find someone from Holy Trinity, even in Hawthorne.

[12 : 17] Well, Judy walked in and we started talking to our accountant about all sorts of things to do financially and wondering what to do with our finances for the future.

When Ross, the accountant, said, trust me, I'm an accountant. Well, we all laughed. Apologies to any accountants out there. But when Jesus says, believe in God, believe also in me, his words ought to be believed.

He can be relied upon. He's more than an Anglican minister. He's more than an accountant. Jesus is God. Look at what verses 10 and 11 say.

Just let me read a couple of bits from it. It says in verse 10, do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? And in verse 11, he says, believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

But if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus is continually linked with God the Father and so he is again here.

[13 : 26] It may be hard, as I said, to believe an Anglican minister from time to time. It may also be hard to believe what accountants tell us because they are mere human beings. But friends, Jesus is God.

We can believe him. And we've seen throughout the Gospel that Jesus speaks the words of God and he performs the acts of God.

shouldn't he therefore be believed and trusted like God? If Jesus tells his followers not to let their hearts be troubled, must it not be because he has ample and justifiable reasons to do so?

Well, it's a brave person that believes in Jesus as the only way to God today. Western society doesn't really tolerate Bible-believing Christians very much anymore, do they?

But why should it be any different for us today as it was 2,000 years ago to believe in God, to believe also in Jesus?

[14 : 33] And that's what Jesus wants his disciples to do here, to continue on, even though he's leaving, to continue on believing in God and believing in him.

In verses 2 to 3 we see that he's not leaving them to abandon them. Rather, his departure is there for their advantage. Sure, he's going away, but he's going away to prepare a place for them.

And that will be for their benefit if he goes. And he's also, Jesus is going to come back at the end of the age and to get them so that they may be where he is.

And what more could they ask for? They've seen him for all those years, they can trust him, they should trust him now. And it's necessary now for him to go.

They just need to continue on trusting and believing in him. Now, a few years ago, mum and dad, dad gets a bit of a caning today, but it's alright, I love him.

[15 : 38] They moved to Mackay in Queensland. And they had told us about moving there for years. And indeed, the lifestyle that they talked about because they cruised up there for a while, the lifestyle they talked about up there sounded ideal.

And they moved there not only for their own benefit, which is what I thought it was for some time, but they also moved there for the benefit of us. Hard to believe because we moved to Melbourne, but anyway.

The reason they moved there for the benefit to us is because in Mackay, they have a house there which has room for visitors. And every time we go to Mackay, there is a place for us to stay and relax.

Mum and probably dad have prepared the room for us to come and stay and make it all nice and rosy and sweet and so on. Now, it's a long way to go to go for a holiday to Mackay, but in the middle of Melbourne's winter, it's certainly an idyllic place to go.

It's almost heaven on earth sometimes. Well, look, it wasn't necessary for mum and dad to move to Mackay to prepare a place for us to visit. They had a perfectly good house in Sydney. And we could go to Mackay any time we wanted to for a holiday, stay in a caravan park or do whatever.

[16 : 57] But it was necessary for Jesus to go and to prepare a place. And it is through him and his death on the cross that a place is prepared for those who believe, who trust in him.

And we now have that invitation extended to each one of us to stay in his father's house forever. And it is only through him that we will get there.

It's not in our own efforts or any other way. Well, in verse 4, Jesus says that the way to this future life is known.

But again, one of his disciples, Thomas, expresses his ignorance not just of the way but of the destination to where he's going in itself.

And clearly what Jesus has been speaking about has passed him by. He says in verse 5, Lord, we don't know where you're going.

[17 : 59] How can we know the way? Now today we might say that it seems Thomas is a sandwich short of a picnic or that the light bulb's on but there's no one home with that sort of comment.

But would we have done any better? Would we have done any better? Now Thomas' question draws out an important response from Jesus and it's probably one of the better known verses in the Bible in verse 6.

Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Let me read to you what one person has written about these words of verse 6.

Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life. The stress in this verse falls on the word way since that is the issue in question.

The way to heaven is Jesus himself. Faith in him shatters the barrier of sin and death and blasts open the road to eternal life of the kingdom of God.

[19 : 16] It is the road that leads to life. He is also the truth and the life. The reality and truth of God are incarnated in Jesus Christ who embodies the indestructible life of the ever-living God.

This audacious claim carries a major corollary. No one comes to the Father except through me as the end of this verse says. The exclusivism of this statement must not be reduced.

Peter makes exactly the same claim later on in Acts chapter 4 verse 12 where he says salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Now at a time when religious pluralism and syncretism are widespread such claims are never going to be popular. Nothing less however is the implication of Jesus' incarnation.

If in Jesus God has come among us in person to reconcile his rebellious lost world it follows necessarily that through him and him alone is the way to God.

[20 : 35] The exclusiveness of Christ's salvation is simply the uniqueness of his divine person. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through him. Now there's a bumper sticker which has been around for a number of years which has a play on the words no N-O and the other no as to have knowledge K-N-O-W and the bumper sticker says no Jesus no life no Jesus no life why do we have life in Jesus?

The reason is seen in verse 7 when Jesus says if you know me you will know my Father also referring of course to God the Father life is available through Jesus because he is the giver of life of eternal life if we believe this then certainly it helps to relieve the troubles that we see from day to day in this world it helps us to make sense of it I guess it doesn't mean that the troubles of this world will go away overnight but it helps us to make sense of them and it gives us also a glorious future to look forward to where our troubles are done away with but Philip's response in verse 8 is rather like many of us I think and it must be exasperating for Jesus Jesus has literally just said if you've seen me you've seen

God and Philip's response is Lord show us the Father and we will be satisfied I don't think it's something that's synonymous with the name Philip I think that's synonymous with all of us show us the Father and we will be satisfied and his plea here articulates the longing of the heart of humanity throughout the ages to see and that is to see and know the living God Moses had uttered it centuries before when he communed with God in the tent of meeting he says in Exodus to God show me your glory many of us desire that God reveal himself to us in our daily lives in a unique and a special way which is special for us but the truth is he has already done that in Jesus look at Jesus response here to Philip in verses 8 to 11 verses 9 to 11

Jesus said to him have I been with you all this time Philip and you still do not know me whoever has seen me has seen the father how can you say show us the father do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me the words that I say to you I do not speak on my own but the father who dwells in me does his works believe me that I am in the father and the father is in me but if you do not then believe me because of the works themselves the words and works of Jesus are none other than the words and works of God the father in him no other explanation of them is possible nor does Jesus give any other explanation of that but as we've seen throughout this gospel people would just not believe

[24 : 28] Jesus even though they saw these works even though they heard what Jesus said they just would not believe him perhaps it was due to selfishness hardness of heart and so on that these people would not believe him well how blind are we to God's work in our lives the answer to that might be seen from the remaining three verses you see for the second time today we see the words in verse 12 the words very truly I tell you Jesus says very truly I tell you listen to what I'm about to say pay attention this is very important he's telling his disciples listen up he says the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and in fact will do greater works than these because I am going to the father Jesus is not saying that his disciples would do more amazing miracles than he after all raising someone from the dead is about as amazing as you can get isn't it rather the disciples he's saying the disciples working in the power of the

Holy Spirit would carry the gospel of God's kingdom beyond the walls of Jerusalem and into and throughout the whole world and we as believers are called to proclaim the gospel to see people become Christians to see people converted and we should expect it and the disciples did this with fire in their bellies after Jesus rose from the dead they were confused for a few days but when Jesus came back to life they realised and understood who he was and they went out proclaiming the Christian gospel we too as his followers living in the time when Jesus has left this world and now await his return ought to be doing the same but we don't do this on our own in verses 13 to 14 we are called to pray in the name of Jesus for this to happen and it's not for our own glory that we are to pray for this to happen but it's for the glory of

God through his son Jesus and that way as we pray in that sort of vein God will answer according to his character and will God will not grant requests contrary to his nature or will and we cannot use his name as a magic formula to fulfill our selfish desires I think that's a wrong motive of prayer but if we are truly following God and seeking to do his will then our requests will be in line with what he wants and he will grant them and for all these things to happen it was necessary for Jesus to go the way that he did the way of the cross there was no other way before he died his ministry was to a small group of faithful human beings and we see here the doubts of those human beings of Peter of Thomas and of

Philip but they were still a small group of faithful people now through his death and because he is in heaven his spirit equips and enables us his people to carry on his work so today is his people the church we're called to continue believing in Jesus as the only way to truth and life let's pray our heavenly father we thank you for your word we thank you that it encourages us and inspires us and lord we're very conscious that in our 20th century world to believe the bible is not a popular thing lord I pray that you would encourage and equip each one of us to continue on believing your word and doing what it says give us the courage as christians to proclaim the christian gospel to our unconverted friends to those around us at work at home wherever we may be and lord we thank you that we are able to pray for these people and I pray that we would have the discipline of prayer to pray for these unconverted friends and to pray that we would continue on believing help us in our doubts and our fears to trust in you as the way and the truth and the life amen