

Lost?

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- [0 : 00] Let me read just one paragraph from the beginning of chapter 13, just to set this in context. Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who are in the world, he loved them to the end.
- And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper.
- And then on to verse 36. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me afterwards.
- Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, will you lay down your life for me?
- Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow. Till you have denied me three times. Let not your heart be troubled.
- [1 : 28] Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
- And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am going, you may be also.
- And you know the way to where I'm going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know the way to where you're going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life.
- No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.
- Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it's enough for us. Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip?
- [2 : 35] 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 authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.
- Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do also the works that I do. And greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.
- Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.
- Well, I want you to imagine that a man discovers the answer to the most important question a human being could ever ask.
- [3 : 46] And his answer was so incredibly simple and beautiful and radical that it changed the face of the world.

It made the discovery of penicillin, or the search for the Higgs boson particle, or the best play Shakespeare ever wrote, seem boring and small and unsatisfying by comparison.

In fact, the answer to this question was so profound and so breathtaking that even a great ancient institution like Glasgow University used it as its motto.

But then, with time, people forgot the actual question. And although the answer was everywhere and people knew it was important, it had become meaningless.

Well, that is precisely what happened with the answer Jesus gave in the passage we just read. His answer is everywhere you look, on every gate and souvenir and notice board in the west end of this city.

[5 : 02] Via veritas vita. I am the way and the truth and the life. When I was a student at the vet school here in Glasgow, I was even given a pair of silver cufflinks with those three Latin words engraved on them.

It's a funny sort of gift, I know. I come from a funny sort of family. But although I could never escape Jesus' answer, those three words, I somehow never understood that they were the most beautiful thing I could ever be told.

If I'd only understood the question which those words answered, then I might have known it was the one question above all which I needed to settle.

So let's look at why Jesus' answer is so incredibly significant. And really the heart of it is just four little words. Four of the most bold words ever spoken.

I am the way. It's an answer which only makes sense once we recognize the Bible's view of human beings. Think perhaps of a research scientist back at Glasgow University.

[6 : 18] Someone driving forward mankind's great quest. The search for understanding and for truth. That's what we as human beings esteem above all else, is it not?

The noble search for the knowledge which makes the world better. But here's how the Bible sees humanity. It is possible for a human being to lead the field of intellectual pursuit.

Possible to live a life seemingly filled with meaning and purpose. And yet remain thoroughly, abjectly, lost.

Have a look at the first page of John's Gospel, chapter 1. And you'll see that clear as day. Chapter 1, verse 9. The true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

He was in the world. In fact, he made the world. Yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

[7 : 26] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he, that is Jesus, gave the right to become children of God. You see, there is a true home.

A true destination for mankind. A destination which we will not discover at the bottom of a test tube or glimpse through even the most powerful telescope.

And yet, unless we find it, we are stumbling about in half-truth, out in the dark, cold night. And according to John, Jesus came to a lost people with a simple message.

Come home. He came to offer them purpose and hope and a way back. I've left the door open for you, he says, and a light on in the window and a place kept just for you.

So come in from the cold. Come home. And with these four little words in our passage, I am the way. Jesus is telling us how to come home.

[8 : 40] So turn with me back to chapter 14. And we'll look at it a little more closely. Now, if you're very observant, you may have noticed already that although we're only halfway through the gospel, the whole focus is already on the cross.

This passage is really all about Easter. Jesus knows that his execution is less than one day away. The clock is ticking and he has a lot to teach his disciples.

One page back, Judas had crept out into the night to plot Jesus' death. And now he's left alone in a small room with his closest friends.

And we're allowed to overhear here his last words to his disciples. Words that explain what Easter is all about.

He tells them in this passage why it is so important that he dies and rises again and what life will look like after the cross.

[9 : 49] And that's why it begins with the words of verse one. Let not your hearts be troubled. You see, what he's had to say has been very troubling. But Jesus wants his disciples to grasp that awful though it is, the death he is determined to face will be a good thing for them.

In fact, it's the very thing which makes his message such good news. And so Jesus makes now three breathtaking claims about himself.

Claims which give true meaning and purpose to mankind and claims which are only possible because of his death and resurrection.

Firstly, in verses one to six, Jesus claims that he is the way to a true home. There is a true home for human beings beyond this life.

We belong in the house of God the Father with Jesus. And what the Bible tells us about that true home is that it's real and it's solid and lasting.

[11 : 04] It's like this world, like this life, but without the pain and grief and injustice. But actually, the focus here, the point, isn't so much on what that true home is like, but on how we get there.

Jesus insists that this life is going somewhere, but we don't have to fumble our way towards it. He is going by the cross to prepare it for us.

Just pass your eyes over verses five and six again and notice the question which triggers Jesus' answer. Thomas asks what all of us want to know, doesn't he?

Lord, we don't even know where you're going. How can we possibly know how to get there? That is what Jesus is replying to with that famous sentence which Glasgow University has stuck on every gate and signpost and even the stupid cufllinks of mine.

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. The way is clearly where the emphasis is, isn't it?

[12 : 26] That's the answer to the question. Jesus says, come home and let me take you. It's not like Jesus simply shows us how to get there.

He doesn't point to a bridge that we all have to walk down. No, he is the bridge. He is the way. Normally, if you ask someone for directions, they'll say, go straight ahead and take the first left and then follow the one-way system and if you're anything like me, you're hit by a big Glasgow bus before you ever reach the place you're trying to find.

That is not what Jesus does. He doesn't give us directions. He says, actually, where you're trying to get to is my country and there's room there for everyone no matter how messed up but you'll never find it by yourself.

So come with me. Let me take you there. And that is exactly what Jesus did by submitting to the cross on that first Easter and carrying all the guilt and the filth which bars us from heaven.

For everyone who believes in him, verse 1, he has become the way home and only in him is there truth and life. Now, I'm not going to duck the fact that Jesus is making a completely exclusive claim here.

[13 : 57] I've heard people try to twist these words until they become absolutely ludicrous. But just read them for yourselves honestly for a moment and make up your own minds.

Crucifixion was the cruelest death you could possibly imagine and it's less than 24 hours away. If there was any other way for Jesus to deal with the problem of our sin then why would he have chosen this way?

Yet as we've seen, he is determined to face up to it. So I'll admit that people don't like what Jesus is saying here but I don't think we can wiggle out of what he's actually saying.

Believe me, people try, even preachers. But if you read Jesus' answer in context like a reasonable adult, there's simply no getting around it, is there?

His argument goes like this, by going to the cross I am making a way to a true home for everyone who will trust me and there are many rooms in that home, room for anyone at all, no matter who they are or what they've done.

[15 : 19] But there's only one way and that way is my death on the cross. Well, I'll let you decide for yourselves.

I don't know about you, but I'm glad there's even one way for the kind of person like me to be allowed back to the father. And I'm even more glad that I don't have to jump through hurdles to get there or perform any sort of religious exercise or pass a moral test.

I just have to cling to the one man who is the way, even for rotten and hypocritical people like myself.

love. But there's more to the message of the cross, because not only does it make him the way to a true home, but secondly, it makes Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone the basis of a true relationship.

That's the message of verses 7 to 11. Jesus states the principle in verse 7, if you know him, you know God the Father.

[16 : 37] You cannot have a meaningful relationship with someone unless you truly know them. And you cannot truly know God unless you know Christ. That's the principle.

And if that is what you want, a meaningful relationship with the one at the heart of the universe, then this second question from Philip in verse 8 is profoundly helpful.

Because Jesus' answer to this question unpacks just how that sort of a relationship is possible. Now it's easy to be critical of Philip here, for being a bit slow to cotton on.

But I think he simply wants what every human heart down the ages has craved. Not just to learn about the Father or build up some impressive theology, but to see him and know him.

Now is that really possible? To know what God is like, what he's really like? Philip just wants to see with his own eyes the God he was made to relate to and love and walk with.

[17 : 56] But what he's not yet realized is that he's already got the very thing his heart is longing for. In fact, the God who made him and loved him is also the man who will die for him in less than 24 hours.

And he's standing right in front of him. Have a listen again to verse 9. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. The point is that Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father.

Look again at verse 1. To believe in God, you must believe in Jesus. If we want to know God, you must know Jesus.

It makes sense, doesn't it? If we want to know and relate to a God who is bigger than us, who is outside of this world and beyond our minds, then he has to take the initiative.

[19 : 09] He has to enter into our world and make himself known in flesh and blood. And that is exactly what he did. But hold on one minute.

I've said that all of this is about the cross. All of this flows on from Jesus' warning and those words in verse 1. Let not your hearts be troubled. So surely if we want to know God, to see him personally and to relate to him, and if the way we know God is to know Jesus, then it would have been better if he'd stayed around a little longer.

Better if he'd not bothered with the cross. God is known to us. No. Look at what Jesus says in verse 7. From now on, from now on, you do know him.

There was something about that first Easter, about Jesus' death and resurrection, that completes what Jesus does in making God's character known to us.

God's death to God's relationship possible, but even his death and resurrection help us to know God better.

[20 : 34] And I think this is why Jesus' obedience to God the Father by embracing that awful death on the cross shows us just how loving and committed to his people God is.

That is what it cost him to let us come home. And we can only really know God when we grasp that he is holy enough to care about sin and loving enough to pay even that cost.

God is holy and God now if all that is true, if Jesus' words and his works are how God himself is made known to us, then Jesus Christ is a man like no other in history.

Nobody else can say I am the truth. His words carry weight. They carry ultimate authority. And John has been making the point all the way through the gospel of backing up Jesus' words with the extraordinary works he did.

Works which proved beyond doubt that he really was who he said he was. So the point of verses 10 and 11 is that through Jesus' words which John has written down for us and through his incredible works, especially his final work on the cross, we have all that we need to know God.

[22 : 14] We haven't seen him face to face like Philip did, but none of us in this room are ignorant of the words of Jesus of Nazareth, at least in this passage.

We cannot leave this church building without having been confronted by the words of Christ. And if we reject them, we reject God the Father.

Jesus' life and death means we can know the one we truly long for. And if we know him, we can relate to him. We can belong to him.

I am the way, the way to a true home. I am the truth, that perfect, true revelation of God himself.

And lastly, very briefly, I am the life. The last few verses of our passage begin to show us how the death and resurrection of Jesus make him the purpose of a truly fulfilled life.

[23 : 28] Now, if you've been conned as many times as I have, then you're probably very suspicious when someone offers you the secret to fulfillment. It's funny, isn't it?

When my wife and I go to the dentist, she picks up a magazine which will tell her that she'll find fulfillment and contentment in a nice home or a beautiful pair of boots or something like that.

And I will frantically search around for a magazine telling me where to find this secret of contentment and happiness. And eventually, I'll gloomily pick up a magazine promising that I can find it in a six-pack in just six weeks or something like that.

And somehow, when you read the small print, contentment never quite seems worth all the hard work of diet and exercise. exercise. What I've never read in a dentist's waiting room is anything like this.

The secret of a life here on earth that is filled with true meaning and true purpose, according to Jesus, is for that life to revolve around him.

[24 : 41] So far, Jesus has been talking about eternal life, hasn't he? But from this point on, until he goes out into the night to face his death, the focus will be on what life will be like for followers of Jesus here on earth.

That's his disciples' concern, isn't it? That's why their hearts were troubled. But they need to see that not only does the cross open up a way to the Father and fully reveal the truth about God, but it's also Jesus' death which makes possible the fulfilled Christian life here on earth.

Now, Jesus has lots to say about that life over the next few chapters, but all I want us to notice now is what he says in these last three verses, verses 12 to 14.

And these seem like the hardest verses to believe in the whole chapter, don't they? Jesus says that following his death and resurrection, whoever believes in him will do greater works than even he did.

Now, what on earth can that mean? Well, let me suggest that the life which truly fulfills is a life which means sharing in Jesus' work and playing a part in Jesus' mission.

[26 : 10] That's what verses 12 to 14 are all about. They're tricky verses and you're probably not convinced yet, but I hope you will be if we unpack them quickly. Clearly, Jesus cannot mean that we disciples of his will do more spectacular miracles than he did.

that would miss the whole significance that John attaches to Jesus' works. The whole point of John's gospel is that restoring sight to the blind or raising a man from the dead proves that Jesus is a unique and highly significant individual.

He's a man like no other in history. But John says throughout this book that the purpose of Jesus' works was to convince anyone who would listen that he was the Christ and the Son of God.

Their purpose, the purpose of these spectacular miracles, was to give life to every one of us in his name. To shout clearer than anything that message which he came to proclaim.

come home. And so his meaning in these last verses really is pretty simple. When I go to the cross to achieve all that I've come to do, that message of mine will become more powerful, not less powerful.

[27 : 43] In fact, it's only my death for sins that makes that message possible at all. look at the end of verse 12. It's precisely because I'm leaving you and returning to the Father that you'll be able to do these greater works of calling people home to me.

So after Easter, everything changes, and the greater work of offering life in Jesus' name will belong to you, disciples.

that work will be greater in power, in that only the cross makes the gospel possible. It will be greater in clarity, in that only the cross makes sense of both God's love and his justice, and it will be greater geographically and numerically as my death breaks down every national barrier separating lost human souls.

And all the greatest still because the one doing this work through us disciples is Jesus himself. Whatever you ask in my name, meaning whatever you ask in accordance with who I am and the things I love and what you know about me, this I will do.

Jesus' death means living the life which truly fulfills, the life which does his work in this world of ours.

[29 : 28] So that's the message of Easter in Jesus' own words from these 14 verses. His claim is radical and utterly exclusive. And the truth is that some of us sitting here just won't want anything to do with it.

But I hope you can at least agree with me that that is what Christianity claims. That there is a true home for human beings.

That this life is not devoid of meaning or purpose, but it's heading towards a destination. salvation. And Jesus claims that this whole life, all truth, finds its fulfillment in him.

To get truth is to get Jesus. To know God is to know Jesus. And there is no other way.

But there is at least that one way. And it's open to any one of us who is prepared to accept it. The door is open.

[30 : 40] Jesus says, I've made a way even for you to enter my father's house. It's not too late. It's not too difficult. Just don't delay too long.

I've left a light on for you. There's bread and wine on the table. and a warm welcome. So come home. Let's pray.

The true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him. Yet the world did not know him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Jesus, I admit that you are both Lord and God.

And I thank you, Lord, that in your cross there is a way, even one way, back to the Father. Father. So I put all my trust and confidence firmly in you, Jesus, to be that way back home for me.

[31 : 56] Amen.