

*“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

If we were to take a survey of Bible verses—not of people’s favourite verses, but of what they consider the most important words in Scripture, what do you think would be considered the most important? To a certain extent, we cannot pick one verse over another. After all, the whole of Scripture, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 is the word of God, and, as Paul tells Timothy: *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:16–17, ESV) And yet, if you could only know one thing from Scripture, what should it be? Most people, myself included, would likely think of John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16, ESV) This verse has often been referred to as the “Gospel in a nutshell”, as it sets before us the wonderful message of God’s grace in Christ. These words assure us that God loved us enough to do what we cannot do for ourselves. He gave His Son to save us from sin, death and hell. They promise that those who believe in Him are forgiven and that they have eternal life. These words turn fear to hope; they turn defeat to victory; they turn death to life—a life greater than anything we have ever known.

We could go on talking about the beauty and glory of John 3:16 for hours. But that isn’t our text today. Instead, our text is what may arguably be the second most important words in Scripture. They come from a portion of Scripture that is among the most requested readings at the funerals I have conducted. In part, that is because of the wonderful words of promise that our God gives us in the opening words of our Gospel lesson today: *“Let not your hearts be troubled. 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 you may be also.”* (John 14:1–3, ESV) Oh, there is such beauty in these words and their wonderful promise of heaven’s eternal glory. But I would suggest that what really matters is the words that follow—the words of our text today, as Jesus tells us: *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

What Jesus says so clearly, so plainly is that there is one way, and one way only, to the joy of heaven that He has just described. He says that there is only one way to the Father, and that He alone is the way. But Peter tells us that for those who will not believe, the idea that Jesus is the only Lord and Saviour is *“A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.”* (1 Peter 2:8, ESV) In our multi-cultural and relativistic society, this absolute claim of the Saviour is seen as intolerant, arrogant and misguided. After all, we are told, every religion is an attempt to reach God. So what if they have different ideas and philosophies. So what if they have a different view of God. Aren’t they all just different ways of reaching the same goal?

If you were to travel to Edmonton from Calgary, the easiest route is to take the QE2, and that will give you various options when you reach Edmonton, depending where you want to go in the city. I know that some people hate major highways, so they only travel on side roads or back roads. Let’s assume for a moment, though, that once you are on a highway, there are no off ramps; no connections to other highways; no crossroads until you reach your destination. Travelling on highway 9, with no way to change direction, will not get you to Edmonton. The Trans-Canada highway will take you across Canada. But no matter how much you believe it will get you to Edmonton, and no matter how long you drive on it, you will never get to Edmonton.

And yet, people want to believe that no matter what they believe; no matter what god they follow, they are still going to end up in the same place. It is wishful thinking, brought about by our desire to want to find our own way of getting to the eternal home that Jesus has prepared. It isn’t even logical to believe this, especially for those who claim to be Christians. If all religions lead to the same eternal destination, then Jesus is lying to us when He says: *No one comes to the Father except through me.* And if Jesus is lying to us, how can we believe anything He says? There are only two possible choices: either Jesus is, as He says, the Way, the Truth and the Life, or else He isn’t a way to life at all.

It is precisely for this reason that these words of Scripture are so important. What we are dealing with here is a matter of life and death—and that means eternal life or eternal death. Follow the Saviour, who gave His life for you on the cross, and you will

find forgiveness for all your sins. Trust in the Saviour who destroyed death when He rose again from the dead, and you will have life with Him in heaven. Jesus is the only way to eternal life, and we need to know this. And yet, people keep following their own way of salvation. But that doesn't mean they have found the right way. Being sincere in what you believe isn't going to mean that you have that blessed eternal life that Christ has won for us through His death and resurrection. Being a good person isn't going to matter if you've still been going in the wrong direction. I passed a car the other day that had a bumper sticker that read, "Pagan and Proud". Will that pagan still be proud when they find themselves in hell? Of course, people will say, "well, that's just your opinion". But again, if Jesus is telling us the truth (and let's remember that He is the truth!), then that pagan must be wrong—and will learn that they are wrong, much to their dismay.

Just because we want to believe something is the truth, it doesn't make it the truth. Have you heard of some of the silly things people have thought would prevent or cure the coronavirus? One of the "fake news" sites had a very official looking banner urging people to snort cocaine as a cure against the virus. One so-called American pastor promoted a supposed miracle cure that really was nothing more than drinking bleach. And yet, there were 50,000 people in Uganda who took this supposed cure. Others have promoted it—and tried it—even here in North America. Some have suggested that a regular consumption of tequila, vodka or scotch will help prevent the coronavirus.

You may feel the high of cocaine or the alcohol, but it isn't going to prevent the coronavirus. Bleach is good for surface sterilization; it is not good for your body. It will hurt you, not help you. No matter how much I want to believe that a good glass of scotch will make me immune, it isn't going to protect me from COVID-19. The same is true for our spiritual lives. No matter how much we may want to believe that our own path is as good as the one way that is Jesus Christ, it won't save us.

No matter what the world wants to believe, there is one way—and only one way to the life God wants us to have through Jesus Christ. God wasn't trying to make this hard; in fact, He has made the way clear. He has made it accessible through His Word and by His grace for everyone. Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life. All other ways that people would follow to heaven are ways of their own making. Isaiah reminds us: ***"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way."*** (Isaiah 53:6, ESV) Instead of following the path that God has set before us; instead of following Christ in faith, we have decided we have a better way to reach our goal of eternal bliss. All other religions teach, in some way, shape and form, that the way to heaven is by your being good enough, enlightened enough, wise enough to see where you are going. The problem is that we are lost; lost in the darkness of our own sin, lost in the blindness of our own unbelief. We aren't able to find the road on our own, and we don't have the strength to travel it. But Jesus is different. Jesus is the way, because He is the one who comes and gives Himself for you and me on the cross, that He might take away the sin that burdens and blinds us. He came to bring us the forgiveness that made us fit for life in that heavenly kingdom. And He rose again to be our travel guide, to lead us in His steps, in His way, the only way that leads to heaven. Jesus knows the many routes that sinful mankind would follow. He knows that there are many roads people think will lead to heaven. But the true God of all says they won't get you where you want to go. He alone is the way that leads to eternal life.

The devil keeps telling you that you can go whatever way you want, and you will be fine. But the devil wants you to 'get lost'. But Jesus says, "I am the way. Follow me. I am the truth. I won't mislead you. I will be with you through all the struggles of your life in this world, and I have told you about the wonderful home I have prepared for you. I am the life, and through Me, you will have a truly blessed life in My kingdom, filled with joy and peace forevermore."

Yes, He is the Way. He is the only way. In a world filled with so many confusing ideas and supposed ways of life, we are blessed to know the One who is *the* Way; *the* Truth and *the* Life. In Him we do find the fulness of all God wants for His dear children—for you, the one for whom Christ died and rose. He gives you His Holy Spirit that you may follow Him, as He leads you to the blessings of life forever. Amen.