Jesus The Way

John 14:1-14

Key Verse:14:6 “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

In the previous chapter Jesus predicted Judas’ betrayal and Peter’s denial. His disciples were stunned and frightened by Jesus’ predictions. Jesus was confronting his impending arrest, trial, and crucifixion. In this crucial moment Jesus gave them a command. “***A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another***.” (Jn 13:34) Jesus could have told them many other things to encourage them, but he told them to love one another because God is love, and love overcomes the world. When we the disciples love each other, we overcome not only ourselves, but also this troubled world. Loving one another is a command to obey, not advice to recommend. Did you obey Jesus’ command last week? Did you practice God’s love by loving others?

In today’s passage Jesus continues to encourage his disciples with a command and promises. In his answers to their questions Jesus teaches us the most powerful and important message for our salvation. His message is deep and significant, so we need to listen to his message with a prayerful mind.

First, you believe in God and believe also in me. (1-4) Look at verse 1. “***Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.***” There were reasons why his disciples’ hearts were troubled. Jesus predicted Judas’ betrayal and Peter’s denial. In 13:33, 36 Jesus told them that he would leave to go somewhere where they couldn’t follow. His disciples were like anxious children whose mother was leaving them behind. When I was young, my parents often argued. At that time my mother told us to leave home and go somewhere we didn’t know. I cried and told her not to leave home. I was afraid of if she really would leave us alone. Sorrow, fear, and anxiety filled his disciples. They did not know what they would do after Jesus left them. They left everything, their families and jobs, to follow Jesus. They expected to see Jesus’ glorious kingdom with their own eyes. But Jesus repeated that he would leave them and go where they couldn’t follow. They did not understand what Jesus said. They became very anxious about the uncertainty of their future without Jesus.

We can walk through the valley of death with perseverance as long as we know where are going. We can overcome financial difficulties, relationship conflicts, and health issues when we have hope for the future. But when we do not know where we are going, we are like a ship tossed by the wind, floating without any direction. When we confront the uncertainty of our future, anxiety attacks us and makes us and fearful powerless.

What did Jesus say to his anxious disciples? Jesus gave them two things, a command and a promise. Jesus said in verse 1b. “***You believe in God; believe also in me***.” The old NIV says this with mild descriptions, “*Trust in God; trust also in me*.” But the new NIV describes this as a command, “*You* believe in God; believe also in me.” So, believing in God is a command, not advice. They must obey his command to trust in God and trust in Jesus.

What did Jesus mean when he said, “*Believe in God; believe also in me*.”? Jesus meant that our God is the sovereign Lord who rules the world and controls all things under his power and authority. In other words, our almighty God will take care of us, help us, protect us, provide for us, and guide us no matter what situation we are in. King David said in Psalm 23 that even though we walk through the valley of death, we will fear no evil, for God is with us and his rod and his staff comfort us. (Ps 23:1-4) Amen! Last week in Chicago I met a man whose wife is the great granddaughter of Henry Appenzeller, one of the first American missionaries to Korea in the late 19 century. At that time missionary Henry, his wife Elizabeth, and three other missionaries took a ship heading to Korea, a remote country, believing that the Lord God would be with them. They heard that many missionaries were persecuted and killed by the Korean government. Still they went to Korea with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They entrusted their future and life into God’s hand because they believed Jesus’ promise that he would be with them always to the very end of the age (Mt 28:20).

Next, Jesus gave them promises after giving the command. Look at verses 2-4. ***“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? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.***” In ancient days in the Middle East, a whole family would live together under the same roof, with parents, their children, and grandchildren. In order to live together the house would be big enough with many rooms. Jesus said that the Father’s house, the kingdom of heaven, has enough space and rooms for them to stay. There is no housing problem in the kingdom of heaven. Imagine the size of the universe. Scientists say that the universe is expanding every year. Jesus promised to come back to his disciples and to take them to the place where he will be with them forever. Jesus would not leave them alone like orphans, but come back to bring them to heaven.

Jesus’ promise encourages us when we struggle on this earth with our security problems. Our Heavenly Father owns the kingdom of heaven, which provides our permanent dwelling place. On this earth we have to pay for rent, mortgage, insurance, and maintenance fees to maintain houses and buildings. Besides this, we have to cut the grass at the least once every two weeks, cut trees, trim branches, and clear garbage. But in heaven we are free from all these duties and labors. Paul the Apostle said in 2 Corinthians 5:1, “*For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands*.” When we leave this world and go to heaven, the Lord God will provide our eternal house in his kingdom, where we live forever with him. Amen! As long as we have hope and faith in Jesus’ promise, we endure all kinds of hardships and sufferings. Paul continues in Romans 8:18, “*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us*.”

Second, Jesus is the way (5-11) When Jesus said, “*You know the way to the place where I am going,*” in verse 4, Thomas, one of his disciples, asked him, “***Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”*** (5) Thomas was honest, but his question came out of despair and anxiety. He still didn’t accept Jesus’ promise. How did Jesus answer him? Look at verse 6. “***Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me***.” Jesus answered him that he was going back to the Father. Then he explained how we can go the Father. First of all, Jesus is the way to the Father. We appreciate the word that Jesus is the way in two aspects: access and acknowledgment. Jesus is the way to God. He is the access to enter the kingdom of heaven. Without him there is no key and access to heaven. God did not give us any other way or key for us to come to him but through Jesus, his Son. Acts 4:12 says, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*” Muhammad cannot be the way. Buddha or any other great men in human history cannot be our saviors. This is because Jesus is the only one who died for our sins and opened the way for sinners to come to God.

Jesus is the way to know the Father God in heaven. In verse 8 Philip said, “***Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”*** Jesus answered in verses 9-11, “***Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?” Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.”*** We had no way to know who God is before Jesus came. After Jesus came, he showed us who God is through his life and teaching. Through the Son, we came to know who the Father is. John 1:18 says, “*No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known*.” Paul said, “*The Son is the image of the invisible God.”* (Col 1:15), and Hebrews 1:3 says, *“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being*…”

Next, Jesus is the truth. What is truth? Truth is one of the most difficult words to define. But Jesus answered it with a word, “I am the truth.” We appreciate his words in two aspects: covenant perspective and redemptive perspective. Jesus is the truth because he fulfilled God’s promises. God promised to send a Savior to this world right after Adam sinned. (Ge 3:15) This promise was continued through many servants of God starting with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David, finally being completed in Jesus. Jesus is the truth because he sets us free from the slavery of sin and the power of death. Jesus said in John 8:31,32, “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” Jesus said this after he set free from condemnation a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. Jesus sets us free from the slavery of sin and death and provides us real freedom. The truth sets us free from the chain of uncertainty and gives us an answer for our future. Jesus taught his disciples where they came from and where they were going. Jesus teaches us today the same. What is life? Where did we come from and where we are going? The truth answers, “We came from God and are going back to him.” The truth answers us and frees us.

Finally, Jesus is the life. Jesus is the author of life and the provider for eternal life. John 1:4 says, “*In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*” Jesus participated in the creation of the world in the beginning. (1:3) Jesus gave us not only *bio* (physical life), but also *zoe* (eternal life). John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” Jesus said in John 5:24, “*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life*.” He also said in John 6:54, “*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at that last day*.” Jesus continued, “*I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?*” (11:25,26) Jesus promised to come to his disciples for their eternal life after he went to his Father.

Someone may ask, “I don’t know what my life is on this earth, how can I know and have desire for eternal life? I am too young to think about my afterlife.” We don’t realize the necessity and the urgency of eternal life because our life on this earth seems too difficult to carry and too uncertain to handle. But if we don’t have assurance of eternal life, we will be restless wanderers like Cain or the fearful disciples. Because of the assurance of eternal life and the hope of the kingdom of God, we live on this earth with faith, love, peace, and thanks. As a ship reaches the harbor safely after many storms, so we also reach the kingdom of God after many toils and hardships.

There was one high school dropout who spent all his youth writing graffiti. When he was introduced to a Bible study, he was on a high feeling from smoking marijuana. This young man, who called himself ‘alley cat’, was changed by Jesus’ word in today’s passage John 14:6. He met God personally at the ISBC in 1997. He had assurance of his salvation and of being a child of God. Now he became a Bible teacher and pastor who teaches many wandering young people with the truth of God. Jesus’ word is truth, because his word has power to change, power to save, and power to heal. Amen!

Third, Jesus’ promises: we will do even greater things than Jesus did (12-14) Jesus gave his disciples two promises. They will do great things as Jesus did. Look at verse 12. “***Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”*** Someone may ask how the disciples could do even greater things than Jesus did. Here, Jesus meant the work of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would receive power and they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Ac 1:8) Without any restrictions from time and space, the disciples would work by the help of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we also experience the power of the Holy Spirit when we work in the name of Jesus Christ. At the ISBC in Louisville Kentucky, we will see the Holy Spirit work greater works than Jesus did. Amen!

Next, the power of prayer. In verses 13,14 Jesus gave them a tremendous promise. “***And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it***.” Here we pay attention to the words, “in my name.” Jesus repeated it twice. Why in Jesus’ name? Why not pray to God the Father directly? In a criminal court, a criminal has no right to defend himself unless the judge allows it. The criminal needs a lawyer, an advocate, who defends him. We are sinners who do not deserve to defend ourselves. We are too sinful and God is too holy. We need a mediator between God and us; this is Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 2:5,6 says, *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people*.” Jesus wants us to believe in his promises and pray in his name. Jesus never lies because he is the truth. What he promised will be kept when we pray by faith. By prayer in Jesus name, we can move mountains. By prayer in Jesus’ name, we can cross the Red Sea. By prayer in Jesus’ name, we can see the vision of God’s kingdom. By prayer in his name, we experience one miracle after another in our daily life. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” What he said, it means all.

These days we are sorry that many Christians, even pastors and ministers, pray without mentioning the name of Jesus. Satan, the Prince of this world, misleads people to omit the name of Jesus in our prayer. All the more we must pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who loved us and died for us. I pray in the beautiful and truthful name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Amen.