



Sermon, July 31, 2016
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

Sermon Series: Come Meet Jesus
“Knowing Jesus :: Knowing God”

Scripture: John 14:1-14

14:1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. **2** In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. **4** And you know the way to the place where I am going.” **5** Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” **6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **7** If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” **8** Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” **9** 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’? **10** 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. **11** 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. **12** Very truly, I tell you, 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. **13** I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

Opening Story

Driving along a busy street, a man became aware of an impatient woman who was tailgating him. She was so close that when he had to brake to allow some children to use a pedestrian crossing, she almost crashed into him.

Furious at being delayed, she sounded her horn and began waving her fists in a disgraceful exhibition of a road rage.

Before she could move off, she felt a tap on her window. It was a police officer who ordered her to step out of the car.

He then asked her to come down to the station where she was searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and put in a cell. A couple of hours later, after vehicle checks had been carried out, she was told that she could collect her valuables and that she was being released without charge.

The woman was extremely indignant at her arrest and demanded an apology.

The officer responsible explained the reason for the mistake. "You see, madam, I pulled up behind your car while you were sounding your horn and loudly cursing the driver in front of you. Then I noticed the 'Follow Jesus, Not Me' sticker on the rear window, the 'God Is Love' sticker, and the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the bumper. Naturally, I assumed that you had stolen the car..."

Christian Faith is more than spouting a bunch of slogans, It is about Congruent lives

Well, there's a whole sermon just right there in that story, isn't there? You know someone has said that if Christianity dies out in the world it won't be because of atheists or communists or even Satan himself. It will be because of the behavior of Christians. If everyone acts like the lady in the joke I just told, I can understand what they mean.

A number of years ago a saying went around that goes like this: "If being a Christian were outlawed and you were brought to trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Think about that for a while. I often wonder about myself. Would people even be suspicious that I was a Christian?"

What all this is about is congruence. Congruence. Do our actions line up with what we profess to believe? Are we practicing what we preach? The whole assumption that the police officer was operating upon when he arrested the angry woman in the car was that the Jesus stickers on her car indicated something about the character of the person driving the car. Or at least, you should expect a certain level of behavior. The woman's behavior was not congruent with the proclamation of her identity.

Transformed Life, Saved from Old Way of Being into New Way of Being

In today's reading from the Gospel of John, Jesus says his life is congruent with the Father's life. Christians for centuries have misused this passage to argue that Jesus is the only way to get into heaven. Jesus

doesn't say anything here about getting into heaven. He says he is the way to the Father. If we have seen him and get him, we have seen the Father. Jesus and the Father are congruent. Look at Jesus: you see the Father. But more important, Jesus is the way that is true and is life itself. His way is true life. Play with the words all you want, but the point is that it is not about abstractions, dogma, correct doctrine, or anything to do with our culture. It has everything to do with connecting to God through Jesus by means of the Holy Spirit.

Is our life congruent in the same way? Do people look at us and see the Jesus we follow? Jesus says, “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these...” Belief is not agreement with this or that doctrine. In fact, the phrase ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΕΜΕ, “believe in me,” also means “have faith in me.” Not *about* me, but *in* me. “Believe” is the verb form of faith in Greek. If we could do it in English, it would best be rendered as “faithify in me.” We misuse the phrase “believe in,” as in “I believe in ghosts.” That means we agree with the idea that ghosts are real phenomena. But we don't trust in ghosts. Unless it is the Holy Ghost, perhaps. But you get what I mean, right? We trust people = We place our trust in people. This is the force of “believe in me.” So, do our lives reflect a complete and true trust in Jesus?

Put our Trust in... What?

As I read this passage over and over this last week, something struck me about a simple little preposition that John uses a lot: “in: **In** me, **in** my name, *in* my Father and my Father **in** me,” etc. A lot of *dwelling in* or *abiding in*. This is very important. This “dwelling in” theme is going to be further elaborated in the verses to come. Jesus has come to show us the way (path and manner) to make our home in God. Not God as vacation home, but as full-time dwelling. Why does Thomas say “we do not know the way?” Not because he is dull, but because he and the others haven't fully grasped that they cannot find this dwelling place in God by taking the world's path. Just as Lazarus had to be divested of the trappings of death, so the disciples need to be divested of what the world has told

them about life and truth. Paul struggles with this idea as well, saying at one point, in Galatians 3:27-28, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” We die to the old and rise to the new. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17: “From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”

This believing/trusting/faithing in Jesus produces a new life, a life different from the world around us, so much so that we have to continually check in with Jesus to be sure we are walking in his way. It is a true way of life. It is a way of true life.

This is all part of the work of salvation, the work of grace. Our salvation is from the old life into the new life. We are saved from the old way of the world and saved into the new life in Christ.

In order to live this way of truth, we have to peel away the layers of untruth and falsehood that the cultural and social systems in which we live have accumulated and covered over any way resembling Jesus’ way.

So how do we apply this today? How about using the formula that Jesus uses: A Way that is Truth and Life.

Way of Truth and Life

Jesus shows us the Way to the Father. It is a way in all senses of that word. The Way is a path we take, and the manner in which we walk on that path. The first step is to accept the fact that this is a Way of living and thinking and behaving that is distinct from the world around us. Choose it as a path, perhaps a road less-taken, that is spiritually-driven and Spirit-led.

It is a Way of Truth-seeking, Truth-speaking, and Truth-living. Seek truth in all things. Resolve to speak truth in all situations. Check for truth in your conversations, e-mails, Facebook posts, etc. Don’t be satisfied with

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hearsay, rumor, or the million easily-manipulated images you see on Facebook, in e-mails and on TV. Check facts, verify them. If not true, don't spread rumors or falsehoods.

It is a Way of Truth and a Way to Life. Seek to enhance and preserve quality of life in as many ways as possible. For example, before voting, ask yourself, based upon what this person presents to the world in terms of past behaviors, attitudes and proclaimed positions, will the quality of life for all persons be enhanced or only for a few?

In our United Methodist tradition, we have a great exemplar in seeking to live the Way of Truth and Life that Jesus taught in John Wesley.

Wesley sought a life that was molded and shaped by the grace of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. He developed a simple 3-point Rule of Life for people to use as a guide in life: “By Doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; By doing good, by being merciful after your power; thirdly, by attending on all the ordinances of God.”

These are a way to a new way of being. Jesus didn't just die to give us a ticket into heaven. He lived and died so that we would die to a life that was really death in disguise, and start living a life of spiritual growth, as Paul says in his Letter to the Ephesians, “to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” Eugene H. Peterson puts it this way: “To follow Jesus implies that we enter into a way of life that is given character and shape and direction by the one who calls us.... The way of Jesus cannot be imposed or mapped – it requires an active participation in following Jesus as he leads us through sometimes strange and unfamiliar territory, in circumstances that become clear only in the hesitations and questionings, in the pauses and reflections where we engage in prayerful conversation with one another and with him.” We can't do it on our own, and praise be to God, we don't have to do it on our own. “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you” (Romans 8:11).

And so, next week: Jesus promises us this Spirit.