

## ***“I AM...the Way, the Truth, and the Life”***

*Exodus 33:12-23 • John 14:1-11*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • March 31, 2019

We live in anxious times. People today are experiencing stress and anxiety and worry at nearly epidemic levels. Recent surveys indicate that nearly 60 percent of Americans believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. And yet it's unlikely that you would find much agreement among those 60 percent on what the right direction would be. We are more polarized than ever over almost everything – politics, religion, money, how to raise children, you name it. The news media drives a lot of the polarization. They don't just report the news they try to sensationalize it. They want you to be outraged. And when we look at our world today it seems to be working.

So we desperately need to hear Jesus say, “let not your hearts be troubled.” This is one of the great themes of the Bible. In Matthew 6 Jesus says, “don't worry about what you're going to eat or wear. Seek first the Kingdom of God and He will provide all those other things for you.” We usually get that backwards. We spend so much of our life seeking material things that we don't get around to seeking God's Kingdom. We run out of time or energy or money. But if you put God first in every area of your life you will find that you end up with your needs met.

In the case of today's passage, Jesus tells his disciples not to be troubled because they *are* troubled. And rightly so. This takes place in the upper room during the Last Supper. Jesus has just finished telling them troubling things. He told them that one of them will betray him. He said he is leaving and they can't go where he's going. And he told them that before morning Peter would deny even knowing him. And then Jesus says, “but don't worry.” Have you ever tried to *not* worry about something you're worried about? It's nearly impossible because trying to not worry just makes you think more about the thing you're worried about.

Jesus tells us that the cure for worrying is belief. He says, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” This

sentence is a bit tricky to translate and the ESV translates it word for word but the meaning gets kind of lost. A better translation would be something like, “You believe in God, so therefore believe in me.” As we are going to see, in this passage Jesus makes some of the clearest claims that he is God.

In verse 7 Jesus says, “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” The disciples are quite confused at this point so Philip says, “show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” What Philip is asking for is a vision, a demonstration of God. Jesus sounds a little frustrated at this point and so he just bluntly says, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” He then reminds them of all of the miracles that he has performed over the previous three years. Jesus has already given them the demonstration that Philip wants. He has shown them his divine nature and they still don't get it.

I find this very comforting. Too often I find myself asking God to just show Himself to me. Maybe you do the same thing. Yet He's already shown Himself to me countless times. Most importantly, He's revealed Himself to us in His Word. When we read the gospels we see the works Jesus did. We hear the words Jesus said. We see the Father. By spending time with Jesus in the Bible we see what God is like – loving, forgiving, sacrificing.

Perhaps the most comforting thing Jesus says, the thing that can calm our troubled hearts, is what I call the “Great Promise.” You're familiar with the Great Commandment: love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. And you're probably familiar with the Great Commission: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. Jesus' Great Promise is this: “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.”

The image Jesus uses here is of a wedding. In ancient Israel once a bride and groom’s families had agreed on the arrangements for the marriage, the groom would go add a room to his father’s home for he and his wife. Once the room was complete the groom and his wedding party would go get the bride and her attendants and bring them back for the wedding. Jesus says that he loves you so much that he is preparing a room for you in his father’s house. When it’s time he will come and take you there himself. This is the source of great hope. No matter what is happening in your life, you can be confident that Jesus has a place for you and that he will take you there himself.

Then Jesus says, “And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas, you know, doubting Thomas, says, “hold on a minute. You didn’t tell us where you’re going. How can we know the way.” And Jesus answers, “I Am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” In today’s relativistic culture this is perhaps the most scandalous verse in the Bible. It sounds so exclusive and narrow-minded. How can you claim that Jesus is the only way to God, the absolute truth, and the source of all life? The answer, as we have seen, is that Jesus IS God. The scandal to the earliest Jewish hearers of this is that Jesus says “I Am,” which is literally the divine name of God. In this passage Jesus repeatedly says, “I am God.” Once you understand this it only makes sense why Jesus says that he is the way to God. If you’ve seen Jesus you’ve seen God. He and the Father are one.

Jesus also says he is the truth. The idea of truth has fallen on hard times lately. Postmodernism claims that there is no such thing as objective truth, that there is only your perception of truth and so something can be true for you but not for me. I don’t think

anybody really believes that. It doesn’t take much effort to demonstrate to someone that the result would be chaos and violence, because what would stop me from hurting you to get what I want? My truth says it’s OK. The idea of relative truth is really just a tool for people to get what they want without having to appeal to objective truth. Of course this is not really new at all. Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” Which led Jesus to answer, “You can’t handle the truth.” Or wait, maybe that was Jack Nicholson. What Jesus really said was, “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

Back to Pilate’s question, what *is* truth? Perhaps what can help is to think of truth as reality. What is real? We tend to think of reality as only what we can see and touch and measure. In *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis describes a bus trip that takes a group of tourists to heaven. The surprise is that in heaven the tourists are like ghosts while the people in heaven are “solid people.” His point is that what we think of as reality is actually only temporary, eventually passing away. But what is real, what is true, what is eternal can’t necessarily be seen and measured.

What’s true is Jesus. Colossians 1 puts it like this: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you

continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.”

That leads us to the final point, Jesus says, “I am the life.” Paul tells us in Romans that separation from God is death. But Jesus gives us life, eternal life, life that we can begin

enjoying right now. If we believe. And if you believe in Jesus you know God the Father. And if you trust Jesus (and turn off the news), you will experience the hope and joy that results in a heart that is free from worry and trouble.

*Amen.*