

John 14:1-14

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[0 : 00] John 14, verses 1-14 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, and you know the way to where I am going.

John 14, verses 1-14 Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are 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 is enough for us. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me?

[1 : 25] Philip, 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 also do 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 for anything in my name, I will do it.

We live in a world that has a strange relationship with the truth, don't we? If you read the newspapers, or believe what politicians tell you, no one really cares for the truth anymore.

[2 : 45] Emily Maitlis, the Newsnight presenter on television, says in her new book, they are really struggling more and more to have politicians give them straight answers to straight questions.

What's your favorite color? And they'll answer something like, well, what I think the public really wants to know is the color of the sky, because that's what they can see.

It's so bad that people who write and talk about this kind of thing say we're in a post-truth culture. Truth doesn't even matter anymore, I see.

Your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth. It's whatever feels right to you. Now, Oprah Winfrey made this phrase popular a long time ago, but it's really now that it's becoming so part of our language that everyone talks in these ways now.

The President of the United States even talks about alternative facts, when what he really talks about is lies. But here's the thing, it's not just politicians or celebrities who talk in this way.

[3 : 58] Your truth and my truth sounds like this in our conversations, doesn't it? Well, if you feel that way, then you should follow your feelings.

You must be true to your own heart, because that's who you really are. If you feel you are one of the 99 different genders that you can choose, then that's your truth.

Any way you choose to believe is the right way for you to get to God. And that's really the part that I want to focus on today, because if we unpacked everything in that passage, we'd be looking at it till Christmas 2020 at ELT.

All religions are really the same, aren't they? That's something we hear quite a lot, that people say. If someone feels their faith is right for them, and it feels good, it feels right, then that's the right way for them.

That is their truth about knowing God. It's the old story about people climbing up a mountain from different sides, is how people sometimes describe it, isn't it?

[5 : 22] It's the same mountain, it's just different ways to the top, and everyone gets to the top eventually. And all different religions and faiths and beliefs are different ways to get to that top of the mountain.

If you think about it, when you say that, that sounds a bit arrogant, doesn't it? Because in a way you're saying, I'm the only person who can see that everyone else doesn't know that they're just using different ways to the mountain.

I'm the one who can see what everybody else can't see. But maybe deep down we like that kind of idea, because it makes life easier.

If all religions lead to God, then we don't have to choose. We don't have to commit. If you're on the fence about Christianity, it makes it easier.

Because you don't have to put your faith in Jesus and commit to everything that he asks us to do, because any other religion will be okay too.

[6 : 28] And if you are a Christian, and you've got colleagues or family who are not Christians, friends, it takes the pressure a bit off to share your faith with them.

And more generally, just think about society. We don't like to give offence, do we? I mean, British people even apologise to a street light when they bump into it, inanimate objects.

So ingrained is that desire not to give offence. And one of the big buzzwords of our time is tolerance. And the whole idea of there being one way to God is offensive to many people.

So it's really not just people out there who sometimes think like this. Christians are also tempted to think like this. And who doesn't like a bit of freedom?

We've fought wars for freedom. Nations have been founded to gain freedom. So freedom in deciding how to know God is a good thing.

[7 : 39] Sounds like it. Or at least it's not a bad thing. But we shouldn't be fooled by that kind of thinking. It's dangerous.

A wise man once said, if everything's allowed, then man becomes a slave again. A slave of anarchy. And that's no comfort at all, is it?

Now, you see, in this passage, Jesus is giving people comfort. He's starting to say farewell to His disciples. And He knows soon they're going to be so emotionally distraught at His death that they'll be tempted to moral failure.

They'll be put under pressure to renounce their faith. And the Roman authorities are going to do everything they can to stamp out this new Christian faith in favour of worshipping all their multiple gods, including Caesar.

And especially Caesar. Now, at Jesus' kangaroo trial, Pontius Pilate would already say, what is truth? Doesn't he?

[8 : 45] And it sounds like he was way ahead of his time. That's the kind of question people ask now. So maybe our post-truth era isn't as new as we think. And this is a massive problem.

Because if all religions are just really different sides of the same coin, and I think we'll see here that Jesus disagrees, either that's the case, or if these gods all do exist, then we believe in different gods.

Either all religions are the same, or they are different religions, and then there are different gods. And that's a right mess. So we forget what a mess that is.

Because we don't generally think in those terms. But in the Roman and Greek times, I mean, they had multiple gods, didn't they? And you always had the problem of, what if you offended one of them?

What if you didn't please all of them? You never had the assurance that you were right with the gods. And you can't please them all, so you're always at risk.

[9 : 57] And that's really not a very comforting place to be in. And Jesus is talking to his disciples, and he wants to give them confidence in knowing God, because that is what they need when he isn't with them anymore after his death and resurrection.

So how can we have confidence in knowing God in a world that does its best to take that confidence away? And Jesus tells his disciples in verse 1 there, doesn't he, don't let your hearts be troubled.

And this is our first point. Jesus says, you know the way to God, and it is me. Believe in God, believe also in me, he says in verse 1.

So you don't have to guess how to know God. You believe in God, so believe in me as well. Have faith in me. Trust in me.

Now haven't I proven to you that I am who I said I am? And Philip asks him in verse 8, show us the Father, and he says, I've been so long with you and you don't know me.

[11:06] If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. When the Apostle is asking where he's going and how they might know the way to God here, he tells them, he doesn't tell them, you figure it out now.

You decide what is right for you. What does your hearts tell you? There are many ways up the mountain. Find your own way to God.

No, he tells them, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Verse 6. See, it's interesting.

The first Christians weren't called Christians. That came later on. We read in the book of Acts, they were called followers of the way. So, it seems that right from the beginning what Jesus is teaching his disciples here stuck with them and caught on.

He doesn't say, I am making a way. He says, I am the way to the Father. And it's counter-cultural, isn't it? To claim that kind of exclusivity.

[12:15] It's counter-cultural now, but it was counter-cultural in that time too. And it always will be because it means submitting to Jesus. It means acknowledging that without him we've got no way of getting to God.

No way of knowing God. And that's a very hard thing to do. See, this morning I got in my car and started it.

But it didn't start. The radio came on and the lights came on but there was no engine noise, no spark plugs spluttering, no fan belt turning, no fuel being ignited, nothing.

And thinking back over it, my first thoughts weren't helplessness. It was, what can I do to fix this? How do I problem solve this in a way that allows me to regain control of this situation?

And it was only when I realised that wasn't going to work, that I was helpless to do anything in that situation, that I'd have to leave it for now and call someone later and get to work on my own two feet, that I actually came to know the way of solving this problem, is that I am reliant on someone else.

[13:35] But that's a hard thing to do to get to that point. And that's just my car. That'll be fine. And we'll solve that. But we do the same thing with our search for God.

We want to be in control. And that's why it's so hard to accept that Jesus is right when he says he is the way. Not a way, but the way.

The only way to God. And he can say that because he is God. In verse 10 he says, do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

It would be an arrogant claim otherwise. It would be an arrogant claim for any of us to make. But for him it isn't. Because he is God.

You see, that's our second point, is that we know the way to God because he is the truth. You see, Jesus shatters the idea that truth is an abstract concept.

[14:36] You know, an abstract concept you can apply and you can debate and, you know, if there are any mathematicians here they probably would disagree with me, but an abstract concept is much easier to make subjective.

If it's something out there, it's much easier to kind of, to approach it with my view and your view and it's much harder to debate is this stand black you know, than talking about an abstract idea of a lectern.

And the message by Jesus in this passage is the only way to God, that he is the only way to God is only good news because he is God. He is the truth because he reveals the God who is truth to us.

Truth isn't an abstract concept, is it? It's God's character. Jesus is truth. He is the truth. And he's also the way and the life.

But in this passage the emphasis is on the way to God. So, we read truth and life when he talks about that here and that, in light of that. Why is he the way to God? Because he is the truth.

[15:51] Because he is God. The Son of God. He's part of the Trinity. And therefore he is the only direct way that we can know what God is like.

What his character is like. Here's the writer of the book of Hebrews who talks about how God promised to be faithful to his promises. And he writes this incredible thing.

He says, God swore an oath on his own name so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

Hebrews 6. It's impossible for God to lie because his character is truth. So, Jesus is entitled to claim that he's the only way to God because he's the only one who can display the character of God. None of us are capable of saying it's impossible for us to lie. He's the only one who was able to make that kind of a claim. He doesn't make a way, he is the way.

[16:59] The third point is, he says, you know the way to God because I am the life. Now, we're not talking about the good life there in this kind of sense of this is, I'm living the life.

You sometimes hear people say that, isn't it? What Jesus is saying is that God is the very source of life. God created all life from nothing.

He has always been, he doesn't have a start or a beginning or an end for that matter, he is the very fountain of life itself. Knowing truth and having life beyond death, they're the kind of two fundamental quests of all humans to all time, isn't it?

When you boil it down to that, to those two questions, that's what it comes to. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden wanted the knowledge of good and evil.

They were tempted by Satan to eat of the fruit they were forbidden of. They wanted truth, they wanted the knowledge of good and evil at its base. And because of that, God prevented them from also getting eternal life other than through faith so they were banished from the Garden.

[18:17] But if you look at it, right from the beginning, that's what those two human beings wanted. They wanted to be like God. They wanted truth and life for all eternity. That's why I said, you know, we have a strange relationship to truth at the beginning.

We pretend like it doesn't matter. The world around us can talk as much as it wants to about how we're post-truth and alternative facts and truth doesn't matter and your truth and my truth and subjective truth and all kinds of things and we pretend like that's the case until we're wronged. Isn't it? When someone tells a lie about us, we're very insistent on the truth. And similarly, we pretend there's only one life, there's only this life, make the most of it while you can and we don't care about death until we're facing the death of someone close to us or we're facing death ourselves.

See, that's just another way of saying we long for salvation. See, we long to be free of the lies the devil tells us and keeps on telling us.

We long to be free from the lies we tell each other and the lies we tell ourselves. And every sin is a lie. Every sin involves a lie that we're our own authority and that we don't rely on God for our very existence when we want to take control, when we want to be in charge.

[19:53] That's a lie. So Jesus says the only way you can answer those fundamental longings for truth and life after death is with God.

And the only way to God, he says, is through me because I am God in the flesh. I am God come to you to make God known to you. If you don't believe my words, he says, there doesn't he in verse 11, he says, which are the words of the Father who is in me and I in him.

It's really an astonishing claim for him to make that he is God. Then believe because you have seen the works I've done, he says to them.

Believe on account of the works themselves. What did he do? He did many miracles. Probably the most astonishing miracles he did was to raise people from the dead.

He says, I have power over death because I am the God of life. I am life itself. See, there is no little irony here in Jesus saying I am the way when he would soon be hanging helpless on a cross and I am the truth when the lies of evil people would soon appear to have a spectacular triumph over him.

[21:17] I am the life when he would soon be in a tomb. And when he tells the disciples not to be troubled in heart, he was deeply troubled in heart and spirit.

We read in chapters, two chapters before this. If he is comforting them because they are confused and uncertain and scared, he was about to endure the agony of the cross.

But he could say these things without any irony because he knew who he was, where he came from, and after rising from the dead where he would return, didn't he?

That is where his comfort lay in facing this trial. And he wants to give us that same comfort in knowing who he is and knowing where we will go with him to God.

Now if he claimed to have given the disciples enough reason to put their faith in him as the way, the truth and the life before his death and resurrection, he has given them and us the reason to do that. [22 : 29] When he conquered death and overcame the lies, when he reclaimed life and when he proved his words true. You see, later in John he says, and this is eternal life.

When he prays to the Father, he says that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. we face our own trials and uncertainties, and it's a very confusing world we live in, but in some ways no trial is bigger than the struggle we face to be free from the lies and death looming for each of us.

No one of us has a bigger struggle to overcome than admitting our inability to succeed on our own to reach God, to find another way.

And even if you're a Christian already, putting your trust in God is a daily exercise of faith. And Jesus calls each of us to put our faith in him as the only way to God.

Let's pray.