

John 14:1-12

ILCW A—Easter 5

May 7/10, 2020 at Peace, Wautoma

Today we find rest for our souls in the words of the gospel according to Saint John, chapter 14, the first 12 verses. Let us pray. This is the day the LORD has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.. Amen. Dear friends in Christ,

Describe yourself in three words. That is a tall order. How do you describe your entire life, your accomplishments, your hopes, your dreams, the essence of who you were, who you are and who you want to be in only three words? Most people would struggle to pick just three and would probably change their mind several times. But Jesus was not most people. In our lesson today, he easily describes himself—who he is, what he has done and still does, why he is always relevant—in three simple but very profound words that suited him perfectly. Describe Jesus in three words: way, truth, life. And that is exactly what Jesus is. He answers life's most important question for us. **How do we get to heaven? Jesus is the Way. Jesus is the Truth. Jesus is the Life.**

How do we get to heaven? Jesus is the Way. In times like these, we can be filled with fear, doubt and all kinds of worries about our spiritual lives. We are so often lost and confused. How has your faith been lately? What worries bother your heart today? Are you wondering if you have been good enough to get into heaven? Do you find yourself comparing yourself to others, saying, "I should be in line for heaven ahead of them, because I have been so much better than them." Or maybe all the time you have spent away from Jesus and his Word (or at least church and Bible class) is starting to bother you. At times like these, we need a way to take away our fears. That Way speaks to our troubled, confused hearts today with the comfort he alone can give.

If you have any experience with Milwaukee, you know how giving directions there works. Depending on who you ask, the directions will almost always be different. The number of ways to reach a given destination is almost uncountable. But when it comes to directions on getting to heaven, there is only one way to get there. Picture yourself standing at the pearly gates. Jesus is there with you and he asks you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" Jesus has told us already. **"You know the way to the place where I am going."** The answer to Jesus' question at the gate is simple. "You are the reason I can enter heaven, Jesus. You lived a perfect life in my place to be the substitute for all my sins. Then you offered that life freely on the cross to pay for all my sins, forgiving me once and for all. Finally, you rose from death to guarantee all believers real physical life after death in heaven." We know the way to get into heaven. This is not some game on "The Price Is Right" where you can choose any of three doors and still get a fabulous prize. The only path to heaven, the only door into paradise, is Jesus.

Truth. In these troubling and unprecedented times, we are tempted to ask Pontius Pilate's question. "What is truth?" But Jesus' answer to him is also his answer to us. "All those on the

side of truth listen to me.” We can only follow the way to heaven with a truthful map to get us there. **How do we get to heaven? Jesus is the Truth.**

Jesus tells you the truth about how to get to heaven. Human minds have all kinds of false ideas about this. As long as I am a good enough person, we say, God will give me a free pass into heaven. But this is simply not true. God is very clear about what it takes to find a home in heaven. **“Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** One angry word, one dirty thought, one awful action is enough to keep any of us from heaven. But fortunately we do not have to worry about any of that. Jesus has been perfect for us. This is the truth on which our faith depends: Christ has died to forgive our sins, Christ is risen to defeat death. Christ will come again to bring our bodies and souls reunited home to heaven. Jesus leaves no room for doubt in our hearts. **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

But how can we be sure? **“Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”** Be certain. If you trust in Jesus as your Savior from sin, death and the devil, Jesus will take you to be with him in the eternal life of heaven. He promises us a place there with him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. **“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. 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.”**

In our world today, how do we know what life is? Our concept of normal life is now drastically altered. And what normal will be when Safer at Home ends is still unclear. What truth will we follow? What is the way forward? Pandemic or not, we get all kinds of false, misleading input on that from the devil, the world around us and even within our own sinful nature. How will we navigate the increasingly treacherous waters of our world? **How will we get to heaven? Jesus is the Life.**

The world around us right now is consumed or infatuated or terrified of sickness, dying and death. The invisible enemy is everywhere, and that’s not just COVID-19. That’s lust, anger, disrespect, stealing, or sinful thoughts. We are under constant attack. And we are not always very good at keeping our spiritual defenses up. Many of these grave enemies masquerade as our friends and promise us something far better than the hopeless end they eventually deliver. As King Solomon wisely wrote of human nature, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”**

But Jesus is the opposite of death. By his very nature he is life, and the fullest, most everlasting life possible! Jesus has experienced in the same way we have the pain of losing someone you love in death. He stood at the grave of Lazarus and wept just as we do. He felt the painful weight of sorrow crushing his heart. And that feeling only strengthened him in his resolve to defeat death forever for us. Confronted by the stench of death, Jesus chased it away as only he can, with the fragrant aroma of new life after death. **“Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said.**

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” But nothing could stop Jesus from showing his love for Lazarus and for us, a love which compelled him to show us his absolute power over even the pall of death to give us comfort and peace.

Jesus gives us every reason to trust him as our eternal life source. “When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.” Jesus did not do this to give Lazarus eternal life. He would once again die. Jesus shows us his power today so that we can be certain he is victorious even over death for us. With Jesus at our side, we have nothing to fear, not even death itself. If death cannot separate us from Jesus, then nothing else will, either.

Believe in your way, your truth, and your life, your Savior Jesus with all your heart. Stake your eternal life on him because he has forgiven all of your sins. Faith in Jesus will never disappoint you, especially in these murky and uncertain days. Trust in the one who defeats death, and you will receive the blessings of his promises. Forgiveness of sins are yours through his death on the cross. And that gift is guaranteed to you by his resurrection from the dead. Trust the One who defeats death and you will see the glory of God in your life. You will have the strength to face death with the fresh confidence only Jesus can provide. How do we get to heaven? Trust in the one who defeats sin, death, and hell. Jesus is our Way, our Truth and our Life. Amen.

May the LORD our God be with us, just as he was with our fathers. May he never leave us or abandon us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways. Amen.