

I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life

Today is a blessed day, a happy day, that we gather to rejoice in the love and mercy of God. Today we give thanks to God for Ben's life and for the love and joy that he brings to his family.

Love is at the heart of the Christian faith. The Apostle Paul said that it was the greatest of all gifts. He said love never fails. Imagine a world without love?

The Apostle John summed up his understanding of God and wrote, "God is Love" and he knew this from personal experience, and that personal experience was through his relationship with Jesus.

John, after all, was the disciple whom Jesus loved. Of course Jesus loved them all, but he had a special bond with John.

What did John see in Jesus?

Well, his Gospel, the Gospel of John, spells it out clearly.

In our reading today from John 14, in verse 6, we have Jesus making an amazing claim, that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

I believe that for John he discovered those three aspects of Jesus to be true.

Firstly, he came to know Jesus as the Way.

Jesus had been speaking about leaving them and going to heaven, and he spoke about his Father's house having many rooms, and that he would go and prepare a place for them and come back to them and he said to them, "you know the way" and Thomas, dear old Thomas, you could expect Thomas to ask the sceptical question, "Lord we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way." We need the sceptics in our churches, the people who will ask the searching questions. How can we possibly know the way?

If Thomas never asked this question, we would not have Jesus' reply, recorded by John.

Thomas, "I am the Way."

This is a loaded reply. "I AM" means God. When Moses asked God, *who should I say is sending back to Egypt?*, God said *say to them "I AM"!*

So, when Jesus said this, he was saying something that every Jew would know what he meant. God is the Way and it's through me!

One of the many challenges that churches in the Western World are facing today is that they are both shrinking and ageing as more young people disengage.

Over the last year, as a church, we have begun a journey here with Growing Young. One of the key components of Growing Young is that we take Jesus' message seriously.

Today's message gets to the heart of what it is to be a follower of Christ.

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. This statement embodies what Jesus was, is, and will be. This is getting to the core of Christ's message.

He is saying to the disciples, *listen take this message seriously!*

Thomas, I am the Way!

One of the great inventions of our time is satellite navigation. Most of the time it takes you in the right direction. It is certainly an improvement on the old method of asking someone for directions, "Take the first to the right, and the second to the left, pass the pub and take the third on the right, and the road you want is the fourth on the left, you can't miss it! We've all been there. To be honest, by the time he has told me about the second to the left, I am already disorientated.

There was a moment, in my first charge in ministry, when I went to Springburn Co-op to take a funeral service and then on to Maryhill. It was always this way, but this particular day, I arrived at Springburn Parlour, in good time, to be told that the service would be held at Duke Street Parlour. I was told that you will easily find the parlour. I wasn't that long in Glasgow and unfamiliar with the East End, and when I arrived I could not find the parlour. Panic set in, every second was vital. Have you ever been in a situation like this, when you are desperate to know the Way.

So I stopped and asked a man if he could point me in the right direction, and he took about 3-4 precious minutes trying to explain where I should be going – I eventually said to him, *my friend would you like to jump into the car, and take me to the parlour?* as time was of the essence. You

should have seen the look on his face, but he said OK , and so I was there at the parlour in minutes, and in time for the service. Panic over because someone who explained the way took me on the way.

I can only imagine what he told his wife that day when he got home. I was out for a loaf of bread, and then I was kidnapped by a minister and released after the service.

Jesus said to Thomas, *"I am the way...I will come back and take you to be with me"* and in those majestic words we have the beginning of the journey of faith.

Young people will find it hard today to join an institution, but tell them that there is a Way in life that is unique to being a Christian and it involves a journey and then we might just catch their imagination.

Jesus does not only give advice and directions; He literally takes us by the hand and leads us on the Way; he strengthens us and guides us personally every day. He does not tell us about the Way; He is the Way.

The truth is that we all need a Way to walk in. When left to our own desires and our own choices, our way is usually the wrong way, but for those who follow Christ, literally following in his footsteps, you will find that they are walking in God's way.

Jesus came to show us God's Way. The early Christians were not called Christians at first, that came a bit later, they were initially called, Followers of the Way. I like that description.

That is in essence what it is to be a Christian. A follower of Christ's Ways, and his way ultimately is love.

As a young person, I came to faith at 19. Before that I had little interest in the church or religion. But someone introduced me to Christ and explained to me that it was a journey with Jesus on the Way. A journey that I would have to invest my life in. That, as a 19-year-old, excited me and so all these years later, I believe that I'm still on the Way following Jesus.

Jesus also said the he is the Truth.

When we walk in the Way, we are walking in the way of truth.

Again, many people will tell us about the truth but only one claims to be THE truth. There was only one good enough to make this claim and that was the perfect Son of God, who embodied the truth.

In referring to himself as the truth, he is highlighting, that he is the truth that all scripture and history points to him. Of course, if we read our Bibles, we will discover that it goes much deeper than this, that he is described as the source of all life, and that all things were created through him.

"What is truth?" said Pilate, as Jesus stood condemned before him.

It is a question that we might ask also, *what is truth?*

Little did Pilate realise that before him stood God's truth.

Jesus being the Truth, means that we can stand before him and there is nothing that we cannot ask him. He is the Word made flesh, the very Word of God. If he is Truth, then he is trustworthy and we can depend on him

His words are true, and therefore must be believed and followed. Jesus says, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (8:31-32)

We live in a world where lies and untruths are evident, in all spheres of society, we ask the question, who can we really trust today?

It is refreshing to find someone who is the real thing. What Christ said and what he did matched exactly. This we call integrity.

When Jesus says *"I am ... the truth"*, it is a powerful, exclusive statement. He is saying, you can trust me.

Jesus also said that He is the Life.

When we walk in the Way and we live in the Truth, we experience his Life.

I was down visiting my mum recently and there is a small Church of Scotland on the banks of Loch Fyne and outside it there is a new sign that caught my eye, not advertising the church service, not telling us of what goes on in the church, but which simply says, "Jesus lives". What a great

statement for a church to make. Jesus lives. Death could not hold him down. That is why he is life and he gives eternal life.

In Christ, we discover the life of God. We meet with the one who has surrendered his life, that we might know the fullness of life. Jesus said, "I have come to give life and life in all its fullness."

This is what baptism is all about, Christ laying down his life on the cross. The act of baptism, entering the water, going under signifies us dying to our old ways. Rising from the water, signifies newness of life – a new beginning.

So today, this is the beginning of Ben's spiritual journey, a journey that we pray, he will discover on it, Jesus to be the Way, a way through life. He will discover Jesus to be His Truth. That Jesus will be reliable and never let him down.

He will find Jesus to be his Life. That personal friend and comforter who will journey with him, through this world and into all eternity.

What we are doing here today, is not just a one-off event, but the beginning of a voyage of discovery, a discovery into the very heart of God.

We all wish Ben every blessing today, as he goes forward with God's blessing upon him and for us also who are on the way, may we know God's strength for the journey ahead, and if today we are considering the journey of faith, for the first time, it all begins with taking that first small step of faith. Stepping out for Jesus on the way, trusting him and receiving his Spirit which gives life.

Amen