

6th Sunday after the Epiphany
February 12, 2012

John 14:1-14 "Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Which Way Do You Travel?"

Traveling to new places is made much easier today with GPS and Smart Aps on my telephone. I remember the days of using AAA TripTiks to find our way on family vacations; and while we always ended up in the general area, it was not always door-to-door service. I used paper maps for years to get around, and then would be frustrated when they were not detailed enough for my purposes, especially when there was a new road that wasn't on the map yet. I, also, know a family who was following a map one morning, left for a new destination, and then ended up back at their starting point that evening.

When it comes to finding my way to a new place, I do fine on land, but I would be completely lost on the water or flying in the air. Looking down to the ground from an airplane window, nothing ever looks familiar, even when I'm near home. But I'm sure if I flew frequently, I might even eventually be able to find my way in the air, but I'll leave that to the pilots and navigators. But how would you like to be an astronaut going into the heights as infrequently as they do? I feel much more comfortable driving around in my little car making my way to my destination, using maps, GPS, or whatever is available.

Just as it is helpful to have GPS to find our way around in our cars, we need a spiritual GPS to make our way through life. Jesus is that spiritual GPS, or the Way, the Truth and the Life. If we want to come to the Father in Heaven, we must travel there only through Jesus Christ. Which way do you travel?

Jesus urges us to travel to the place he has prepared for us. He speaks about our spiritual destination, heaven, in the Gospel reading today as a place which gives peace for troubled hearts, and which he has prepared for us in advance of our arrival. The disciples were troubled by the reality that Christ was leaving them, but they were focused on this life and what it would mean not to have Jesus physically with them any longer. Sometimes our own hearts are troubled when we must face the reality of something in life that is different or difficult for us. Perhaps it is an illness, a job change or a loss of job. Maybe it is a death in the family that has left us alone, economic changes that leave our future uncertain, or a strained relationship with a family member or a friend. Whatever it is that causes us to face our future blindly, we can feel alone at such times, and our hearts can become troubled. And so the disciples were troubled on that evening before Jesus' death when he spoke to them about his imminent departure from them.

However, Jesus promises his disciples and us that his departure means that we can still come to him. In fact, he promises that he will personally take us, or bring us to himself. It is not his desire to leave us to fend for ourselves. He chooses to travel with us through the troubles or transitions of life, and he brings us safely to the other side. We never travel alone. Christ always travels with us.

We have convincing truth from God's Word that no trouble in life is too difficult for Christ. Jesus is the one who showed his power over life and death when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus is the one who fed over 5000 men and women with a few loaves of bread and fish. He is the one who sent the Holy Spirit to create faith in our hearts through the waters of baptism. Jesus told his disciples before his death, and he tells us, "Believe in God, and believe in my works." The Word of Christ teaches us that Christ has authority and power to help us through the troubles and transitions of life.

Jesus prepared rooms, or mansions, for us in heaven because he completed the work he came into this world to accomplish for us. The Epiphany season in which we have been traveling since Christmas reminds us that God's Son became flesh and blood in Jesus Christ. We see glimpses of his divine glory in such stories as Jesus' healing of the leper, the blind, the lame, and the deaf. We see glimpses of his divine glory in the "I Am" words we have pondered during this season which show him to be our Good Shepherd, our Door to the Father, our Resurrection and the Life, and the Way, the Truth and the Life. We see glimpses of his divine glory as he prepares our heavenly home by making his way through this life to the cross, which is the bridge between earth and heaven.

Jesus is our spiritual GPS, that is, "God Provides a Savior," who has opened the way to the Father by paying the debt for our sin at the cross. He completed his preparations for us to come to heaven when he went to the cross for our sins, received the wrath from God that we deserve when he became our substitute at the cross, and when he submitted to death on the cross after his sacrifice was complete. Then on the third day he was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and he will return one day to bring us to our home in heaven in new glorified bodies. The home in heaven that Jesus has prepared for us far outshines even the blessing that families are receiving in this life through shows like "Extreme Home Makeover." As wonderful as these homes are for families in need, Jesus has prepared a heavenly home that we can have because he has satisfied our spiritual need.

The disciples could only see their present reality, while Jesus saw the big picture. Jesus could see the disciples making it safely through this life to their final destination in heaven where they already had rooms – or mansions – waiting for them. Jesus has also prepared a place for us in heaven, and he will bring us safely through this life to the final destination that awaits us. We cannot see what lies before us now in this life, but we can see with the eyes of faith that we will arrive safely at the other side. So, also, the disciples could not see what their future life would be like without Christ walking with them, but they did learn that Jesus would bring them safely to the other side – heaven.

We come to our Heavenly Father now through the Word and Gospel of Jesus Christ, because it is the way that God chooses to come to us today. That is why Pastor George is encouraging all of us to read through the Bible this year. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and we cannot come to the Father apart from the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which permeates both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. When we read from God's Word, it strengthens our faith and confidence in our victorious Savior, Jesus Christ. We are also being prepared for heaven and eternal life. That same Word of God works through the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion to bring us to God.

The message of Christ's life, death and resurrection which strengthens our own faith is the same means God uses to bring other people to himself, because God's Holy Spirit creates faith in people through God's Word to trust in Christ. When Jesus says in the Gospel reading, "You will do the works that I do, and greater works than these," he is speaking about our powerful witness about Christ. Jesus finished his work when he went to the cross and rose again from the dead, but our work began at that point. We are the means that God uses to build his church, and our witness is the message through which the Holy Spirit works to create faith in them. Everyday more and more people are being reached than ever before with the Gospel, and we all have the privilege to lead people to the Way, the Truth, and the Life that leads to eternal life.

There is yet another way that we can come to our Heavenly Father now through Jesus Christ. Jesus invites us to come to him in prayer, and he promises that he will always answer it, and God will be glorified when we approach him in such faith. We can be certain that God always hears and answers

our prayers because Christ has reconciled us to the Father through his atoning death. Our sins are forgiven through Christ, and everything is removed that previously separated us from God. Jesus is the Way that we approach God in confident prayer for whatever is on our hearts.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. Which way do you travel?

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