

"One Chance, One Way"

Text: John 14:1-12

Confidence, courage, and wisdom be multiplied to you from God our Father, and from our precious Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Suppose you wanted to go somewhere, like the Kirkwood Mall. How would you get there? Lots of ways, right? You could take the bus, drive your own car, ride a bike, call a cab, get a ride from a friend, even walk. Lots of ways. Next question is what route you would take? Depends, doesn't it? There are several different ways you could get there from here, some better than others. Bottom line is that there are almost limitless ways that could all eventually get you to the same place. Maybe that's partly why mankind has such a hard time believing that there is only one path to heaven. In our experience there are almost always a whole variety of ways to get where you want to go. Not so with heaven. There, there is only one narrow path.

So just how do we go about finding that path? How can a human being ever find his way to heaven? The same way a little child finds Grandma and Grandpa's house: you ride with someone who knows the way, which is exactly what our Savior would have us learn from our text for this morning. That text, found in John's Gospel, teaches us that it is good, commendable even, to be the *little children* of our Lord Jesus on this ride through life, for he himself teaches us that he not only *knows* the way, he *is "The Way."* There is, in other words, no other hope for mankind. We have one chance for heaven, and one chance only. One chance, one way – Jesus Christ. The text that will lay all of this out for us is found in the 14th Chapter of John's gospel:

^{ESV} **John 14:1-12** *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² 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? ³ 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. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ ¶ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long,*

and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. ¹² ¶ "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.

This is God's Word. That is why we can, with complete confidence, base all that we think, say, and do – in fact our entire eternal future – upon these words alone. With unwavering confidence in the power and wisdom in these holy words, we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth. Amen."**

This is one of those texts where Jesus clearly allows only one of two options concerning how we think about or regard him, for either he is the Son of God and Savior of the world, or he is – at best – a delusional liar. Although there are an alarming number of church bodies today that claim that Jesus was simply a guide and good example, that wasn't one of the options Jesus offered. Jesus made claims about himself that are either true or not. Why would anyone follow the example of a man who could not be trusted to tell the truth? In the very first verse of our text Jesus himself says, **"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me."** The Bible clearly forbids the worship of anything created - even the worship of angels – and yet Jesus here invites his followers to believe in him as they have believed in the Father. He goes on in our text: **"If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."** If Jesus is not true God, which is exactly what he claimed to be, then he is a terrible blasphemer and the Jewish leaders had every right - even the duty - to seek his death. If Jesus was really nothing more than what our society claims he was, then the Jews were right to crucify him.

Jesus is clearly *not* what the world has made him out to be. He is infinitely more, as he himself told us. Not only is he **"one with the Father,"** he also says of himself in verse 6, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** This is a description of much more than a good role model for society. In fact it is hard to imagine how this statement could be any

stronger. Jesus here pronounces an eternal death sentence on every man, woman, and child that rejects him as Lord and Savior. To put it another way, Jesus here tells us that every Muslim, every Hindu, every Buddhist, every follower of the Jewish faith, every New Ager, every deist, theist, atheist, agnostic, every follower of Confucius, everyone who practices Voodoo and witchcraft - all are going to hell. No one goes to heaven except those who believe in Jesus Christ. That is what our Lord clearly says here in our text.

Do you believe his words? Stop. Pay attention. Think this through because it is vitally important. Do you really believe that these words are true and accurate? Because if you do, the ramifications are staggering.

Christians absolutely need to learn this immutable, rock-solid truth from their Savior. All who die outside of the Christian faith will go to hell. This is God's declaration. Every single man, woman, and child has one hope, one chance for salvation. **"No one comes to the Father except through (Jesus Christ)."**

The great tragedy here is that Christianity is failing miserably when it comes to sharing this truth with the world. So many seem somehow to be ashamed of it. So man have come to believe that showing love to our neighbor means lying to our neighbor, pretending that everything is in good order when things are anything but. Think of it this way. Imagine yourself lost in the desert, almost dead from lack of water. Suddenly you come to a cool clear spring of water. It looks and smells good and pure and sweet - just what you need to survive. Near the spring sits a man, a stranger, who knows what you do not - that the well is poisoned. He knows two things: that you will die if you drink the water, and that that this is the last thing in the world that you want to hear. He knows that he would much rather make you happy; much rather tell you that the water is as good and pure as it looks. Yet what would you want him to tell you? The truth, or the lie your flesh would like to hear? Would you want him to tell you what *is* true or what you *wish* were true?

The same answer holds true spiritually. Mankind would love to hear and believe that what they *feel* is right and good truly *is* right and good. There is a whole world of false teachers out there telling precious souls not what they need to hear but what they want to hear: *"There are many paths to God."* *"We all believe in the same God – we just give him different names."* *"The important thing is that we all love each other."* *"Good people all go to heaven."*

Do not apologize for the truth that Jesus revealed here to us. It is *his* truth, not yours. Mankind desperately needs to hear that there is only one path to God. That way is Jesus - simple faith that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and that his payment is our own personal possession the instant the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts to believe that it is true.

John, the **"disciple Jesus loved,"** recorded the seven great "I am's" of Jesus in his Gospel. In Chapter 6 Jesus calls himself **"The Bread of Life."** In Chapter 8, **"The Light of the World."** In 10 he calls himself **"The Door"** and **"The Good Shepherd."** In Chapter 11 he is **"The Resurrection and the Life,"** and in 15 he is **"The Vine."** Here Jesus says of himself, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life."** It is an interesting fact of Scripture that God (in this case Jesus) *is equal to each of his attributes.* This is true because he possesses each attribute to an infinite degree. For example, God is not only loving, God is love. God not only acts righteously, God is righteousness. So also in this passage from our text, Jesus does not just show us the way, he *is* the way. Jesus not only speaks the truth, he *is* truth. He not only shows us the way to life, he himself *is* life.

Look again at Jesus' words in our text. Notice that Jesus says, **"I am the way..."** We are not saved by a principle or spiritual force. We are saved by a person, the God-man Jesus. Each time you are tempted to look to something other than the cross of Christ and the empty tomb for your comfort, return instead to these simple, powerful words: **"I am the way."** If Jesus had said, *"This is the way..."* we would be justified in looking for something to do, or a certain way to act in order to be loved by God. On the contrary, we are here told that Jesus himself is *the* way. There is only one.

Thomas gave a logical response in our text, didn't he? Jesus told them that he was leaving, and that they should follow. Thomas, speaking no doubt for all the rest, told Jesus that they did not even know where he was going, so how could they know the way. Yet like riding in the car when you are young, you do not have to know where you are going to be a follower of Jesus Christ. It is a simple matter of keeping Jesus constantly at your side; consulting him at every bend or turn in the road. We do not need to chart our own course when we go where Jesus goes. We don't have to know in advance the route we will take through life. We simply need to keep Jesus in view at all times, and this is really only possible when you remain in his Word, speaking also to him regularly in your prayers.

"One Chance, One Way" – what personal application do those words have for you? Most can look back on their lives and find examples when they had one chance to get something right. One chance to succeed. One critical decision that could mean the difference between life and death. The surgery or medication that could save you or kill you. Maybe that chance encounter when your path crossed with the person who would become your spouse and life's companion. The shot at the trophy deer, the chance to win the game in the last second or final inning, the desperate C-section that would deliver your precious baby or not.

Some things in life are obviously more important than others. In the end, most are just temporary. Earthly things obviously pale in comparison to life and death matters, but compare all of that to the one chance for *eternal* salvation in heaven. That is the one aspect of our existence where we absolutely cannot afford to lose, cannot afford to blow that one chance. Contemplate for a moment the magnitude of the question at issue here, both for the believer and for the unbeliever. Get it right, and you spend eternity in heaven. Get it wrong, and you spend eternity in hell. Jesus alone is the path to life.

Our text, last of all, gives us a startling and wonderful promise: ***"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."*** Some will try to convince you that this passage means that true Christians ought to be able to do the same miracles that Jesus performed. Jesus, in fact, promised that we would do *greater* miracles. How is that possible? Which of us can walk on water, feed thousands with next to nothing, heal the sick, raise the dead? As amazing as these feats are, you can now do greater. These miracles, done in the physical realm, were always temporary. Those who were fed got hungry again. Those who were healed eventually got old and feeble. Those, like Lazarus, who were raised from the dead, eventually died again. Not so with the miracles in which you and I can now play a role. Those miracles have *eternal* consequences. You can be the instrument in helping to turn a human being from hell to heaven. Think of it! When Jesus performed physical miracles he demonstrated God's omnipotence and goodness. You can demonstrate to all mankind the full love and grace of God the Father in Jesus Christ. You can show them that one way, that one chance.

Finally this morning, don't forget to be humbled and thankful. Don't lose sight of the fact that you have already been given the gifts of truth and faith and life. You have found the one path to heaven - Jesus Christ,

who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Marvel at the *fact* that, having found that one path, you will spend eternity with your Savior. Amen.

Scripture Readings

ESV **Acts 6:8-12, 7:2a, 51-60** And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹ Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹² And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, ² And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me... ⁵¹ ¶ "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it." ⁵⁴ ¶ Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

ESV **1 Peter 2:2-10** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation-- ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ ¶ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," ⁸ and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ ¶ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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The Fourth Sunday after Easter – May 10, 2020

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 436 (Red Hymnal)

"The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Acts 6:8-12, 7:2a, 51-60) Last week we heard how God granted a time of peace and prosperity to the young Christian Church following the Resurrection. Yet God knew that peace and prosperity would not help to spread the Christian faith. This morning we learn how he used the death of Stephen to scatter the Christian faith to the far corners of the world. Even in the death of a good man like Stephen, God can accomplish his good purposes. The same is surely true today. While we may not be able to see how God works his gracious will also through hardship, he can and he does. Trust both his wisdom and his love.

Psalm 91 (Supplement page 33) (Brown Hymnal)

The Second Lesson: (1 Peter 2:2-10) How blessed we are to be called the children of God. How privileged we are to know and believe the mysteries of the gospel – the very truths that remain hidden from the world. The Apostle Peter in this lesson teaches us that the same Lord that we view as our Rock and our Salvation has become a stumbling stone and an offense to the world. Peter here also describes our life's work (the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations) in a slightly different way: we are to declare the praises of the One who has rescued us.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 206 (Verses 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense"

The Sermon – Text: John 14:1-12 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"One Chance, One Way"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 433 (Verses 1-5) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus My Truth My Way"

The Prayers followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Closing Hymn – 433 (Verse 6) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus My Truth My Way"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (NA) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	Suspended
	-10:00 a.m.	Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	Suspended
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	Suspended
	-7:00 p.m.	Suspended
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	Suspended
	-10:00 a.m.	Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	Suspended

CLC News – Pastor Michael Gurath is considering the call to St Luke's of Lemmon. Teacher Neil Bernthal is considering the call to Immanuel of Mankato to serve as high school math and science teacher. Teacher Dan Barthels is considering the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne, WY. Teacher Quinn Sprengeler is considering the call to Holy Trinity of West Columbia. ILC Graduate Mikkela Hammond, Eau Claire, WI has accepted the call to serve as teacher at St. Stephen, Mountain View CA.

Public Meeting Precautions – Public services have again resumed at St Paul, but services and sermons will continue to be provided in both audio and printed formats on our website: www.bismarcklutheran.org Please observe prudent precautions if you are attending in person, including spreading out in the pews, touching as few things as possible, and spacing yourselves if you wish to visit after church. Food and beverage service will remain suspended for the time being.

Holy Communion – No decision has yet been made on when or how to proceed with the celebration of Holy Communion. The Church Council will make a decision on this in the coming week and you will be notified. Please don't hesitate to share your thoughts or opinion with a Church Council member. Private communion is always available by appointment with the Pastor.

Confirmation – Confirmation parents are asked to meet with the Pastor after the service this morning.