

"One, and Only "

Text: John 14:1-12

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you from God our Father, and from his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Have you ever been on a plane and wondered if you could land it in an emergency if something happened to the pilots? Maybe it's a guy thing because most men I've talked to admitted they have. In 2007 the guys on *Mythbusters* each tried to "land a plane" in a simulator without any outside help. Both crashed. Each then tried again with a pilot talking them through it. Both landed safely.

In 2010 a hypnotist named Derren Brown took it a step farther. To simulate real-life stress, he filled a plane with actors, except for the crew and one of the passengers. During the flight the crew announced that both pilots were incapacitated and asked for a volunteer to land the plane. At the last minute the one non-actor volunteered. On the way to the cockpit Brown hypnotized the man. While he was in a trance they landed the plane and awakened him in a simulator, where a pilot talked him through the procedure. He too was able to land the "plane" safely. So, guys, the dream is still alive and well.

There are things like that in life, aren't there? There are those "one shot and one shot only" situations where failure can have devastating, life-or-death consequences. Yet when you stop to think about it the stakes are infinitely raised when those stakes are not temporary but eternal. The fact is we have one chance for heaven, and one chance only. When God calls our time of grace to an end, there are no do-overs, no second chances. More than that, there is not only just one chance, there is only one way – Jesus Christ.

Our text for this morning emphasizes that fact – and this is clearly a lesson we need to learn well, both for ourselves and for our neighbor. Our text 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.

Here ends the very Word of God - the words of *God*, not of man. That is why we can with full confidence base all that we think, say, and do – in fact our entire eternal future – upon these words alone. With such confidence in the power and blessing of these holy words, we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth. Amen."**

This is arguably the clearest of all those texts where Jesus himself allows only one of two options concerning how we think about or regard him: 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 he himself offered. Jesus of Nazareth 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 tells 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 put him to death. If Jesus was really just what our society claims he was, then according to the Mosaic Law the Jews actually did the right thing to him.

Obviously then Jesus is *not* what the world has made him out to be – just a good man and fine moral example. He himself ruled out the "just a good man" theory by clearly affirming that he is infinitely more. 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 outside of the true Christian faith. 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 who reject him as Lord and Savior 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 our 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. Many Christians seem somehow ashamed of what Jesus himself clearly taught. As a society we have come to believe that showing love to our neighbor means lying to our neighbor, pretending that it's all good when things are anything but. That sort of make-believe is neither kind nor truly helpful. Imagine your are sitting in the emergency room waiting for the doctor to bring you your test results. Although the test results reveal that you have cancer, he knows that that 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 everything is good and that all the tests came back negative. Yet what would you want him to tell you? The truth, or the lie that you also would love to hear? Would you want him to tell you what *is* true, and to get to work on treating the very real problem, 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 – thing like: *"There are many paths to God"* and *"We all believe in the same God, we just give him different names"* and *"The important thing is that we all love each other"* and the number one favorite on the planet *" All good people go to heaven."*

Do not apologize for the truth that Jesus revealed here to us. It is *his* truth, not yours. You and I need to be reminded and unconverted 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 best of all possible news.

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 and therefore serves as the standard or definition of that attribute. 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 add, or a certain way to act in order to be loved by God. But he didn't. Instead we are here told that Jesus himself is *the* way, and with Jesus it is always a package deal. Either Christ paid for all of our sins, or we must supply payment for all of our sins. Either he paid for the "big" ones, the "little" ones, and even the ones we don't know about, or he paid for none at all – and again we are left with the full debt. And since we have no way to pay God for even one sin here in time, our sentence will be eternal torment in hell.

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 your road of life. We do not need to chart our own course when we go where Jesus leads. We don't have to know in advance the route we will take through life when the only infallible guide walks by our side. 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, and Only" – what personal application do those words have for you? Most can look back at their lives and find examples, times when you had

one shot at something, and one shot only. Sometimes it all worked; sometimes it didn't. Some things in life are obviously more important than others but most, in the end, are just temporary. Now, again, compare all of those earthly things 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 fail, cannot afford to get it wrong. Contemplate for a moment the magnitude of the question at issue here – both for the believer and for the unbeliever: *eternity*, in either heaven or hell.

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. Those 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 *only* way.

Finally this morning, don't forget to be thankful. Don't lose sight of the fact that you have already been given the gift of faith and life. You have found the one path to heaven - Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Marvel at that incredible truth - one chance for eternal life and you, by God's grace, have found it. ***"Thanks be to God who has given us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** 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 Sixth Sunday after Easter – May 14, 2017

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 3 (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now"

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 Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension. 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. Have confidence also in your own life that even through hardship God can and will accomplish his will through you.

Psalm 91 (Supplement page 33) (Brown Hymnal) (Read responsively)

The Second Lesson: (1 Peter 2:2-10) How blessed we are to be called the children of God. How privileged to know and believe the mysteries of the gospel – the very truths that remain hidden from the world. So the Apostle Peter teaches us in this lesson that the same Lord that we view as our Rock and our Salvation has become a stumbling stone to the world. Note also how here again the Apostle emphasizes the priesthood of all believers.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 433 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus My Truth My Way"

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

"One, and Only"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

Offering followed by the Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 277 (Red Hymnal)

"I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 433 (Stanzas 5-6) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus My Truth My Way"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking an altar at which to commune** – Since we desire to follow the words of our Savior, we practice "Close Communion" – a practice that is not new to confessional Lutherans. This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting them to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please first meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word.

Attendance - Sunday (58) Average (45)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/ Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship and Coffee time
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time

CLC News – Pastor Matt Hanel has returned the call to Immanuel of Mankato.

Teacher Paul Tiefel has returned the call to St. Stephen of San Francisco.

Teacher Lane Fischer has returned the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne.

Teacher Heidi Nelson has returned the call to Messiah School of Eau Claire.

Ruth Meyers Drive – A reminder that the current collection for the Ruth Meyers House ends next Sunday. Please check the designated table in the fellowship hall for more information.

Confirmation Sunday – May 28 has been designated as Confirmation Sunday here at St Paul.

Save the Date – Our annual church picnic has been scheduled for Sunday, June 25. Time and location will be announced.

Summer Schedule – Next Sunday (May 21) is the final Sunday before we enter our summer schedule, which means that Sunday School and Bible Class will be in recess until after Labor Day.