

"One Way Only"

Text: John 14:1-12

May the undeserved love of God, together with his mercy and peace, be multiplied to each of you from our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

This past week, while attending the CLC General Pastoral Conference, I stayed with my younger brother and his family, who live in the wooded hill country south of Eau Claire. If any of you are familiar with the area, you know something about the complex road system that winds hither and yon in baffling complexity. At one point my GPS announced that it had given up and that I "was on my own – good luck." Not really, but I do know that I took at least four different routes to and from their house, and I'm sure there were several more – multiple routes that could all eventually get me where I needed to go. 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 teaches us that it is good and acceptable 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 to heaven, he is **"The Way."** There is, in other words, no other hope for mankind. There is one way to eternal life, and one way only – through faith in Jesus Christ. That part of God's Word that spells this out for us, and which forms the basis for our study this morning, 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 the Word of God. God is the Author of these words, not 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 truth and power of 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, and therefore the one and only path to heaven, 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 himself 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 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 here claims to be, then he is a terrible blasphemer and the Jewish leaders had every right - even the duty - to seek his death. If Jesus really was what so many in our society claim he was, then the Jews actually did the right thing to him.

Jesus then 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 outside of the true Christian Church. He here tells us that no one goes to heaven except those who believe that he is their Lord and Savior. 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, or be reminded of, this immutable, rock-solid truth from our Savior. All who die outside of the Christian faith will be lost eternally. 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 Biblical truth with the world. Large segments of Christianity now seem somehow to be ashamed of it. They 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. If you had a curable disease, would you want your doctor to reveal that fact to you and work on a treatment, or hide it from you so that you won't be upset or alarmed? If there was only one route out of a burning building, would you want someone to map out that route, or just let you pick whatever route felt right to you?

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 and thereby defines 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 a certain way to act in order to be loved by God. Jesus didn't do that, didn't say that. On the contrary, we are here told that Jesus himself is *the* way, and with Jesus it is always a package deal. Either we possess forgiveness for all of our sins through faith in Jesus, or we have no forgiveness because we reject him.

Thomas gave a logical response in our text, didn't he? Jesus told his men 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 Way Only" – what personal application do those words have for you? Most can look back in their lives and find examples – times when you had one chance or one way only out of a difficult or dangerous situation – like the surgery that would save you or not. You can also probably recall other times when God directed your path so that something great happened, like the day your path crossed with the

person who would become your spouse and life's companion. The desperate C-section by which your precious child was safely delivered.

Some things in life are obviously more important than others. In the end, most are just temporary. Earthly things obviously pale in comparison to matters of life and death. Yet compare all of this to the one and only path to *eternal* salvation in heaven. That is the one aspect of our existence where we absolutely cannot afford to get it wrong, the one thing where we cannot afford to be uncertain or take risks. 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.

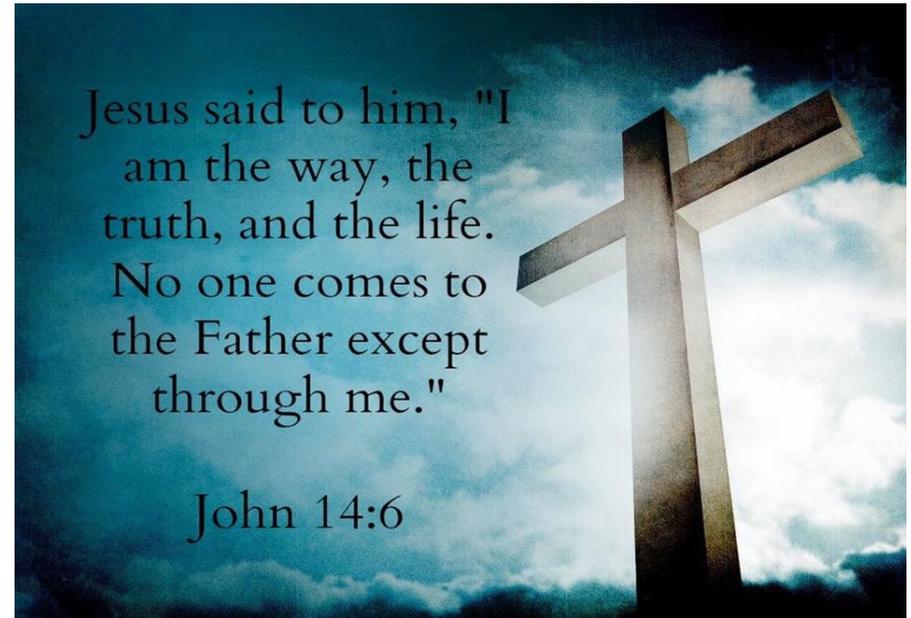
Our text, last of all, gives us a startling and wonderful promise: ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."*** Some will try to convince you that this passage means that true Christians 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 those feats were, 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, as well as providing irrefutable evidence that he was exactly what he claimed to be – God incarnate. Yet Jesus himself here tells you that 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. You can introduce human souls to their Savior Jesus.

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 been shown the one path to heaven - Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Marvel at that fact, and be filled with joy and thanksgiving. One path to eternal life and you, by God's grace, are on it. Amen.

ESV (**Jeremiah 20:7-13**) O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. ⁸ For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. ⁹ If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. ¹⁰ For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" say all my close friends, watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him." ¹¹ But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. ¹² O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause. ¹³ Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers.

ESV (**Romans 6:12-23**) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Confirmation Sunday – June 25, 2023

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 784 (Brown Hymnal)

"Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me"

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

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

The Old Testament Lesson: (Jeremiah 20:7-13) Nothing in God's Word leads us to believe that living our Christian faith in a world broken by sin will be easy. One of the great challenges we face in our present society is the pressure to regard all religions as equal. While that sentiment is obviously the path of least resistance, that is not what God's Word tells us. The Prophet Jeremiah recognized this in his day. Though he suffered terribly for speaking the truth, he also recognized that God's children have no other option. Nor should we seek one.

Psalm 30 (Supplement page 34) (Brown Hymnal)

The New Testament Lesson: (Romans 6:12-23) Not only do godless societies promote the idea that all religions are equal (or equally silly), they promote godless conduct. Paul here addresses the nonsense that Christians can now sin with impunity, since we believe that Jesus died to pay for our sins. The reality is that conversion changes us on the inside, destroying our love of sin. We can now live as free children of God.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – (Projected on screens)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 785 (Brown Hymnal)

"Children of the Heavenly Father"

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

"One Way Only"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers

The Confirmation Hymn – 436 (Red Hymnal)

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

The Confirmation of Gabriel Jonas

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 310 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Thy Table I Approach"

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 – 401 (Red Hymnal)

"Praise to Thee and Adoration"

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 Holy Communion – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone 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 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, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (45) Average (42)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:30 a.m.	– Fellowship Meal
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Roehl is considering the call to Messiah of Eau Claire.

The CLC General Pastoral Conference was held this past week in Eau Claire. Several fine papers were delivered, as well as much study and discussion of current questions and challenges that face our church body today. Though some of the papers involve Greek and Hebrew language studies, Pastor Roehl will be sharing the other papers in the Sunday Bible Class setting this fall.

Confirmation Sunday – This morning is our annual Confirmation Sunday. As is our custom, a fellowship meal is planned to follow the Sunday service. Please join us.

VBS and Church Picnic – Vacation Bible School is scheduled for July 31-August 4, and the annual Church Picnic for Sunday, August 6.

Congratulations – Congratulations to this year's confirmand, Gabriel Jonas. While a special occasion, it is good to be reminded that Confirmation in no way represents the end of Christian education, which according to God's plan does not end until he calls us home.