

I AM (Week 5) - I Am the the Way, the Truth, and the Light

Yesterday's Sermon Summary

1. The last two "I am" statements in John's gospel occur on the night before the crucifixion, more specifically as Jesus and disciples dialogue after 'The Last Supper' in a set of chapters known as "The Upper Room Discourse" (John 13-17). Specifically, we took a look at John [14.1-7](#), with our "I am" statement occurring in John 14.6.



2. Before we talk about what John 14.6 means, we ought to say what it doesn't. Too often some Christians have used John 14.6 as a definitive statement about the utter falsehood of other religions, the exclusivity of the Christian faith, or the terrible fate awaiting all those who aren't Christians. But we know this isn't Jesus' intent because a) His audience is His disciples, those who are already have a relationship with Him, and b) in John 14.1-7 He's trying to salve their troubled hearts (see 14.1).

3. So if that's what John 14.6 isn't communicating, what does it mean? First, we need to examine the three key terms - way, truth, and life - because they're interconnected. A 'way' can be a road or path, or, metaphorically speaking, a way or manner of life. And in the Bible, it's most often meant of the 'way' that God has told or taught us to live.

4. Moreover, 'way' and 'truth' are synonyms, both signaling the moral code and manner of life that God has given us. You can see that in [Psalm 25.4-5](#) (our call to worship yesterday) and [86.11](#), two of what could be many examples. So the verse is saying that if we follow God's 'way,' which is also God's moral/spiritual/relational/behavioral 'truth,' then we will experience 'life' as God intended it. (Incidentally, this connection between 'way' and 'life' is also seen toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount in [Matt. 7.13-14](#)).

5. With those textual details laid out, now let's reflect on what this verse means and why it matters. First, consider this quotation from the late Eugene Peterson in his book *The Jesus Way - A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way*: "Jesus shows the way. He also is the way. He doesn't point the way and then step aside and let us get there on our own as best we can. Jesus points the way but then He takes the initiative, inviting us to go with Him, taking us with Him across land and sea, through all kinds of weather, avoiding dead ends and seductive byways...The way Jesus does it is the way we do it."

6. So Jesus Himself embodies the 'way/truth' that should be exhibited by His followers. He is the example of the 'way/truth' that should be our 'way/truth.' Did you know that the very first label for the Christian faith wasn't 'Christianity' but simply 'The Way' (mentioned four times in The Acts of the Apostles, for example [9.2](#)). And even the term 'Christian,' which also occurs a few times in Acts, just meant 'little Christs,' as if those who claimed to be Christians imitated the way and life of Jesus enough that others could see Him them?

7. There's more to it however. There's a PCUSA minister, Matthew Syrdal, in Colorado who in an online Q and A session replied in part to a query about John 14.6 as follows: "This journey (in the way of Christ) is cruciform for it always necessitates a death before a resurrection, a collapse of an old way before opening a new path. So the way of Christ often leads through multiple little deaths, moltings to who we thought were and who we thought God was or what really matters in the world. Make no mistake – the way of Christ can bring conflict, fear, and even pain, but it also leads to the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price."

8. Thus, to follow the way and truth of Christ is to not follow your own way and truth, nor your culture's. In order to gain the kind of life we see in Christ, we have to give up life done our own way on our own terms. This syncs with something Jesus says in all gospels: in order to find life we have to lose our life first or come to see the deficiency of doing life as we want (for example, see John [12.25](#)).

9. So then, in the verbiage of Rev. Syrdal, it's normal, even expected and good, to experience many "little deaths" along the way to God's better life. It's as if we're "molting," sluffing off one manner and kind of life for God's intention.

10. A good summary of what John 14.6 is trying to say about Jesus comes from Hillary of Poitiers, a leading Christian thinkers in the 300s CE: "He (Christ) who is the way does not lead us into bypaths or roadless wastelands. He who is the truth does not mock us with lies. He who is the life does not betray us into delusions which bring about death...As the way, He will guide us to the truth. As the truth, He will establish us in the life."

Walk in the Way of Christ this Week

Check out more of what the late Eugene Peterson, in his book on this very topic, has to say about Jesus who is the way and the truth:

- [Jesus: the Truth and the Way](#)
- [The Jesus Way Quotes](#)

Here's Richard Foster talking about how the pattern or 'way' of Jesus is to be our 'way' too as His followers: [The Jesus Way of Life](#)

Here is the entire response by Rev. Matthew Syrdal to the question posed about walking in the 'way' of Jesus....it's just three full paragraphs but well worth the read: [What does it mean "to walk the way of Jesus"?](#)

If you're curious about how we as Presbyterians view those who are a part of other religions or faiths, here's a good place to start...it's an official document passed by our General Assembly in 2014: [The Interreligious Stance](#)