

I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

(John 14.1-7)

In our last hymn we have been reminded that Jesus said:

- I am the Light of the World
- I am the True Vine
- and I am the Bread of Life

-these words of Jesus that have been preached in this church over the last month.

Today we come to Jesus saying- I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

- We will be considering-
- How do we find Jesus as the way?
- How do we know the truth?
- How do we live the Life as believers?

What are the implications of Jesus being the Way, the Truth and the Life for us and for others too?

In our reading from St. John's Gospel we hear the wonderful promises that Jesus made about heaven:

- He promised many rooms (or many mansions as some of us may remember from older translations).
- He promised that he was going to prepare a place for the disciples- and therefore for us.
- He promised that he will come back and take us to be with him.

These verses with their wonderful promises were quoted frequently by my late mother as she grew older. They were a great comfort and assurance to her and they should have been a great assurance for the disciples however... Thomas - doubting Thomas - raised the question: "Lord we don't know where you are going so how can we know the way?"

This question raises memories of times in earlier life when I and my family have been lost in the car and not sure where we were going.

Question - when we ask for directions (in the days before satnavs) do people know the way?

As a young child travelling in the car with my mother and grandmother - we had been visiting an elderly aunt in Liverpool while the men of the family had been to a football match and were due to meet up at another relative's house in Widnes - which is roughly to the South of Liverpool.

My mother had been given directions but she was not comfortable that she was going the right way as there were no familiar land marks. She stopped the car and asked a passing lady – she did not know the way to Widnes but she did say that if you get to those red lamp posts just up the road you will be in Bootle. Now Bootle is to the north of Liverpool so my mother knew that she had to turn the car round and head back in the opposite direction and we did safely reach our destination.

Likewise, in life we can sense that we may not be going in the right direction and others can guide us in the right direction to find Jesus and follow him. That may involve a radical change in direction in our lives.

Jesus's reply to Thomas was, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by me.

So how do we find Jesus as the Way? How we come to that personal faith in Jesus is an individual and personal story for each one of us.

My own story:

- brought up in a Christian family
- gone to church regularly;
- went to University and joined the Christian Union; signed that "I trusted in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour"
- knew that was true for me
- but soon found out by going to Christian Union meetings and a church that faithfully preached from the Bible that I had a very basic understanding of the Christian faith and a lot to learn.
- I was at the beginning of a journey and the encouragement and guidance of others has helped me greatly over the years to follow Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.

We may have opportunities to help others find Jesus as the Way and follow Jesus, be they friends or family members.

I am reminded of an occasion when our family needed urgent guidance. We were on holiday in France I was bitten by a dog. This caused considerable anxiety to my parents due to fear of rabies and they decided to take me to the local hospital. However, they did not know where the hospital was or how to get there. They asked a Frenchman the directions.

Unlike the lady in Liverpool he did know where the hospital was and gave very detailed instructions with plenty of gesticulation and many "*gauches* and *droites*." Thankfully, he read the lack of understanding on my parents' faces and said "*suivez-moi*" (follow me). Getting into his car, he led the way through various junctions and roundabouts that my father could keep up with and we reached our destination.

Just as that Frenchman went out of his way and took the time to guide us in the right path, we too can be greatly helped by others believers to grow in our faith and help others too. Others may have given their time and gone out of their way to help us and we too may have similar opportunities to spend time in prayer and other ways to guide others too.

Four years ago, a young American lady called Ashley was staying at our house. She told us that at home Christians both young and older often met over a coffee to discuss a passage of the Bible. Often more mature Christians mentor and support those who are newer to faith in Jesus.

It is important that we follow the correct person.

A third story - this time not lost in a car... Linda, my wife, remembers being in a store in Scarborough on a wet summer day. Her mother was wearing a dark blue Woolworths waterproof coat. Linda found something of interest to look at in the store but, after that, she followed a lady with dark hair and a dark blue waterproof coat all around the store.

When the lady reached the door she turned around and to Linda's horror it was a lady with dark hair and a waterproof coat but not her mother she was lost in the store...

In a similar way as believers we do need to be sure that we are following the "right" people and, like that Frenchman, ultimately lead us to where we need

to be - those who are focused on our Lord and following his word and the Holy Spirit's leading.

As we look back on our lives, we may or may not remember a day or a time when we were sure that we were following Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

We may recall a particular talk in a church or at a rally; we may remember reading a certain book or the Bible itself and being convinced of the truth of Christianity and coming to trust Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

We may also look back and remember times when we had "gone off track" as believers and were not really following Jesus in our lives.

However, we can be thankful that one of the unique things about the Christian faith is that we can always start again. We can say sorry to God, trust in Jesus and continue to follow Him throughout our lives.

Whatever has happened in the past let us all be thankful today that Jesus is the Way for saving us all. We can only come to our Heavenly Father through the forgiveness gained for us by Jesus. And we will know God's guidance in decisions of life the big things and the little things too.

Jesus said, "I am the Truth." Do we know the true Jesus- who he was and is? Do we know his teachings?

Hundreds of years before Jesus, King David wrote in Psalm 119:

"All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal."

God's words in the Bible are true and all the scriptures together show us all God's truth.

How can we do this practically? Have a Bible reading plan; use Bible notes to help. Read some words of Jesus every day (the 4 Gospels).

Remember words of scripture. They come to mind in times of difficulty or if we have times when we are not well enough to read his word for ourselves. Take opportunities to join a group to study God's word together.

Be aware of false teaching and false beliefs, not just cults. We hear a lot about fake news these days and there is a lot of material on the internet – some of which is true and much that is not true.

There is much good material on the Internet about Jesus but also there are those who explain away the miracles of Jesus and the works of the Holy Spirit in the Bible and today. Initially what we read may appear to be true but it can lead to things that are not true.

So to “test” what is said about Jesus we do need to know what the Bible says!

Jesus said “I am the Life.” Jesus opened the gate to eternal life by dying for us on the cross and rising from the dead so that by trusting in him we might have eternal life. That Life is for this world as well as for heaven. There is much we could say about living the Christian Life and our relationship with God through Jesus.

Our reading from Philippians includes both commands and promises that are particularly relevant for the Christian life.

Command - verse 4. “Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.”
Or in the words of the old chorus- “Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done!”

Command - verse 5. “Let your gentleness be evident to all –the Lord is near.”
This is an instruction about how should behave.

Command - verse 6. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

That verse has been very real for me in recent weeks- going through a health scare and the possibility of a major operation. Thankfully it was a benign cyst; no treatment and no follow up. Do not be anxious about anything (this verse was quoted to me by various people and came up in various ways including in this sermon (and a previous one at Long Newton too!)

Promise - verse 7. “The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus too.”

We do have to be careful in this area; we may not always sense God's presence.

In the Old Testament Job said:

"If I go to the east, he is not there,
If I go to the west, I do not find him
When he is at work in the north I do not see him;
When he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of Him."

Job felt far from God but he still trusted in Him. Likewise, for us there will be "dry times" when God may seem far away and we may not sense his presence.

However, God's words for us today are promises that are always true. As we go through the different stages of life there will be hard times and distractions but if we keep our focus on him as our Lord and Saviour we can be sure that he will be with us in this life and lead us to be with Him in heaven.

Jesus promised us that his Holy Spirit will be with us to guide and lead us as we live the Christian life.

So today some encouragements and challenges for us to follow Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Also, a challenge for us to pray that others will know the Way through faith in Jesus. John 14.6 continues, "No one comes to the Father except through me." Let us take Jesus' words seriously and pray that those we know will become Christians.

That includes:

- the children who come to this church
- our friends, families and neighbours

Teesside needs our prayers. Many people far away from knowing Jesus as Lord. Working in A&E at North Tees over the last 25 years, I have seen many who are far from the Lord and held down by addictions and lifestyles.

Let us conclude with John 20.30-31. "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are

written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Let's pray...