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Series: The Gospel of John
Message: Blessed Assurance

Transcribed Message
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John 14:4-6

Well, in a recent survey that was done, 92% of Americans said they believe that there is a place called heaven or at least some kind of an afterlife. There's something beyond this world and this life. Maybe not surprisingly, most of those 92% thought with some degree of certainty that they were going to be there, that they were going to make it into whatever that afterlife was. I don't really think that's terribly surprising because as I tried to think of some words to describe our culture and the worldviews that are prevalent in our day and time, these were the words that I jotted down. Relativism, pluralism, universalism, inclusiveness, tolerance, consumerism. You can add more to that list. But that pretty much captures the essence of the way most people look at the world, the way most people look at things that are spiritual in nature.

This passage we come to this morning in John 14 and in verses 4 through 6, Jesus speaks directly to this issue and to this matter. And not only that, but he really addresses what is the most fundamental, important question that any of us could ever ask. And that simply is, how can I know that I'm in a right relationship with God? How can I know with certainty that my relationship with God is where it needs to be, what it should be? That's about as fundamental and important as any question that we can ask. And so, we come this morning to our big idea. Jesus is the only real answer to the greatest need that we have. He is the only way that we can be reconciled to God. And I would posit that Christianity of all the world religions and all the world philosophies is the only one that can answer that question. We'll see that again this morning.

Let's look at a quick review of this opening set of verses that we looked at last Sunday. It begins, of course, with three great promises, doesn't it? Verses that are very familiar to us. And these promises are so important because they come in response to what is clearly troubled

hearts in the lives and minds of our disciple friends. Jesus said three things in making these promises.

He said, first, that believing in him is the same as believing in God. What an amazing affirmation. He just simply declares his deity. Central to this whole passage is going to be that understanding.

Secondly, he said that he is going to prepare a place for them. The whole point, I think, that we would take from that is that the promise is that we will be with him. I will go and prepare a place for you so that you can be with me. And then, of course, he said he's coming again. What is often referred to, of course, in church history as the great blessed hope of the church. It is that Jesus is, in fact, going to come again as he said. Well, all those promises are a prescription for troubled hearts. And these guys definitely had troubled hearts.

So, let's look this morning not at three promises, but let's look at one incredible, extraordinary, amazing claim that Jesus makes in these verses this morning. Verses four through six. And you know the way to where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The very first thing we see here is this is the sixth of the seven I am statements. Remember in the Gospel of John, we've talked about there are seven signs that Jesus did. That's the whole basis, in some sense, of John's Gospel, right? I am writing these things to you that you would know and believe that Jesus is the Christ. Here are the signs that testify to and point to the fact that he's who he claims to be. So we have seven signs, but we have seven I am statements.

It started off in chapter six with Jesus saying, I'm the bread of life. Then he says, I'm the light of the world. Then he says, I'm the door, right? Then I'm the good shepherd. I'm the resurrection and the life. Well, now here he comes to the sixth one, and he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Every one of those signs, seven of them, and every one of these statements are pointing to the same thing. John's thesis in the 20th chapter in verse 31, Jesus is the Christ. He's the son of God. Believe in him to have eternal life.

As we step into this scene again of the upper room, I remind you that the disciples have absorbed a lot in these last 24 hours, right? Their world has been turned upside down. Not only are they having troubled hearts, but their minds are racing with lots of questions. And the second thing we see is just that, right? There are four questions from four different people that we track through these verses. The one we looked at last Sunday was Peter saying, where, Lord, where are you going? Chapter 13 and verse 36. The Lord says, I'm going. Peter wants to know, where are you going?

This morning we'll see Thomas. In response to Jesus's statement, Thomas says, how? How do we know, Lord? I mean, we're not sure about what you just said. Philip is later on going to say, show us the Father. And then Judas, who's not Iscariot, is going to simply ask, you know, what's happening here? We're not tracking with you.

Let's look at the response that Jesus gives then to this second question. The priority of the way. The priority of the way. This is, in verse 4, something of another enigmatic statement, isn't it? It's puzzling to the disciples. It comes off, again, as something that they're not tracking, that they're not understanding. It seems mysterious for whatever reason to them. And we want to simply ask, should it really be this way? Because when you look at verse 4 again, and you know the way to where I am going. And when they hear that, it does seem enigmatic to them. It seems mysterious. It seems puzzling to them.

But should it? I mean, at this point, you look at verse 4, and you could almost translate it this way. Jesus saying, I've told you all of this before. There really isn't anything new. I'm not sharing any new truth with you in this. I've said these things to you before. How many times has Jesus talked about the cross? How many times has He talked about His suffering? How many times has He talked about even His resurrection and His return to the Father? So, these are all themes and things that He has been teaching them and talking about. And it's almost as if Jesus is saying, we need to understand that this is stuff I have shared with you before. And we want to say to these guys, how are you still missing this? How can you not understand what Jesus is saying? But, of course, they're living it right there in that moment, aren't they? We get to step back. We have the full, complete revelation. We know the story from the beginning to the end and everything in between. So, we are at great advantage when we read this. We do kind of

look a little bit with a critical eye and wonder at times, how dull can these guys be? But I'm pretty sure if we were there and in the moment, we would have been the same way, right? Because here, we get to see it. We get to look at it. But they're living it in that moment.

Their idea of the Messiah and their idea of the kingdom is not lining up with what Jesus is saying, right? Their idea of the Messiah is He's going to come and He's going to bring deliverance, and He's going to overthrow Rome, and He's going to set up His kingdom, and they're going to get to reign with Him. Remember the argument about who gets to sit by Jesus, who gets the throne closest to Him? That's their mentality. That's their mindset. And, of course, it is very different than what Jesus is speaking about.

And I suppose, in all honesty, we would have to say, that's us, isn't it? I mean, when the writer of Hebrews in the 5th chapter says in about the 11th verse, that I would love to be writing things to you that are meaty, that are weighty, that are deeper, but I can't, because he says, you're still stuck with the elemental things of life. You haven't progressed in your walk with God and your understanding of God's Word to the point where I can comfortably step into a lot of doctrine and teaching that you should be familiar with. And, of course, that's still true today. I think our churches oftentimes are filled with people who simply haven't advanced beyond some of the elementary things. That's on us as teachers, and it's on us as listeners, and it's on us as students of the Word, isn't it? So, we have to be careful that we're not too hard on the disciples, because at the end of the day, we're really not any different than they were. They're living in the moment, trying often to figure out what it is that God's doing.

But look at verse 5. We have another confused disciple, right? Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way? This time, it's Thomas. You know, we might have expected that it would be Peter, right? I mean, Peter's the one who often is the one that steps forward. But Peter's still processing, and he's still dealing with a lot of stuff, like – You're going to deny me not once, not twice, but three times. So, I don't think Peter's probably tracking on the same way that the other disciples are at this moment.

And so, it's not Peter who steps in. Verse 5 says, Lord, we really don't know. We don't know what's going on here. It's Thomas. The other ten, I'm pretty sure, are right there with him. And I think if you've been in a classroom, and the teacher says something, and it just goes right

over you, you know, you don't understand at all. You always appreciated, didn't you, when that brave student raised their hand and said, could you please explain that further? I didn't get anything that you meant by that. And the rest of the class probably is like, yeah, that's helpful, because oftentimes that's our experience, isn't it? So, here's Thomas.

We call him Doubting Thomas. It's always interesting, isn't it? But consider this. Consider that Doubting Thomas asks this question, steps into this moment, and because he is willing and courageous and humble enough to raise his hand and say, Jesus, no, we really don't know exactly what's going on here. Can you explain it more? Because he was willing to do that, we get one of the most amazing statements in all the Bible. We get one of the most amazing answers to any question that's ever been asked. And Jesus, of course, is going to speak to that in just a minute.

But I appreciate two things about that whole interchange. I appreciate Thomas' humility. I appreciate his courage. He doesn't pretend. He doesn't bluff his way through. He doesn't act like he knows exactly what Jesus is talking about. No, he's just, Lord, we don't know. We aren't sure about what you're saying. And so you've got to admire his honesty and his humility and his courage.

But then, of course, you also appreciate Jesus' response, don't you? I mean, how many times has he said things, often elementary things, that the disciples just aren't getting, they're not connecting to. How easy it would be to be frustrated and to speak back in a way that was less than kind. There's no put-down on Jesus' part. There's no embarrassing of Thomas. It's an opportunity, isn't it, to teach and to learn. I think it speaks to us as parents. It speaks to us as grandparents. It speaks to us as teachers. It speaks to us as leaders, right? What do we do with questions? Man, those are great opportunities. We should welcome those questions. We should encourage those questions, shouldn't we? Hard questions never drove anybody away from the gospel. Hard questions never drove anybody away from the faith. I think what drives people away from the faith is when they ask hard questions and they get flippant answers or they get an embarrassing response. But Jesus isn't that way at all, is he? He's very responsive.

He gives as clear an answer as you could ever hope to get in verse 6, right? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. A

staggering claim, an extraordinary claim. Before we even get further into the outline, just look at that statement again. There's three of them there, aren't there? There are three statements, three personal pronouns, and three definite articles. And each of those is going to explain something to us. Now, you can look at those, and you can have each of them stand alone and be coordinate statements, and often many people take it that way. Each just stands alone. But I think you can also take it, and that's the way I'm going to proceed this morning, as Jesus making the first statement, I am the way, and then the second two are supportive of that and explanatory of that.

So, let's look at it that way. The way being the emphatic statement. Jesus saying, I am the way. He alone is the way, right? That's what he's saying. He alone is the way. The word "way" is a figure of speech, isn't it? It's all through the Bible. You know, what comes to my mind is Psalm 1. You're not walking in the way of sinners. God knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly will perish. All through Scripture, especially in Proverbs, where you have instructions from parents to their children about the way. You get to the book of Acts. What happens in the book of Acts? The church is literally defined as the way. They're called people basically being on the way. There was a well-known church in California called Church on the Way, kind of a descriptive word to speak of the choice that has been made. We're walking on this path, right? We're walking on this way. Jesus doesn't say, I'm going to show you the way. Jesus doesn't say, I know the way. Jesus says, I am the way, right?

So, you're on a trip, you're going somewhere, maybe it's even in town. And back in the day, I'm just going to throw this in for historic reference, okay? Back in the day, we actually would pull out of the glove box something called a map. And you'd open it up, and the navigating person would be looking at a map. I mean, it just almost seems crazy now to think that we've made our way around big cities and all around the country looking at this map. And oftentimes, we missed turns, didn't we? Now, you know, cars have GPS, and we have GPS on our phones. But even with GPS, it's very often I'm redirecting you, you missed your turn, or that was your turn back there, right? What is way better than a map, and what is way better than GPS? You got somebody sitting beside you, right, in the car next to you saying, yeah, right up here, you're going to take a right. Move over, get in the other lane, you're going to go left up

here. Well, that's basically what Jesus is saying here, isn't it? I'm not going to show you the way. I'm not going to explain. I am the way. What an amazing thing that is.

Get this. The best part is Jesus is the way. He's the way from God to man in terms of His incarnation, right? He is God presenting Himself to us in His Son. Jesus is going to say in our next passage, when you've seen me, you've seen the Father. So, He's the way in the sense that He is God's way from God to man in the incarnation.

But then you just turn it the other way, and you say, but it's also true from man to God. He is the way regarding our salvation. So His incarnation brings about the opportunity for our salvation, doesn't it? Oftentimes when I'm talking with people, and maybe I don't even know where they are spiritually, I might say to them, where are you on your spiritual journey? Journey being just the idea of where are you on the way? How have you seen God? Whatever you understand spiritually, what does that look like in your life? It's a very easy way to help people think about the choice they've made and the path they're on and the way they're going. Jesus says, I'm the way.

And of course, secondly, He says that, I think, because He is the truth. Jesus is the way, first. Secondly, because He is the truth. One of John's favorite words is the word "truth". It takes us back to the prologue, verse 14. The word became flesh, and dwelt among us. We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John loves to speak about truth. Again, it's the same thing, isn't it? Jesus doesn't tell us that He's going to tell us what the truth is. Jesus doesn't tell us that He's going to tell us about truth. He did that, of course He did. He tells us that He is going to, in fact, be truth. He's God's revelation to us.

As I said just a moment ago, if you've seen me, Jesus said, you've seen the Father. Our world is in the condition it's in because the world has rejected God's truth. It's rejected God's revelation about Himself, about ourselves, about the world that we live in. It all started in Genesis 3, didn't it? Adam and Eve. God said, if you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die. The serpent comes along and says, you aren't going to die. And they turned from the way and they believed the lie. Romans chapter 1. Paul picks up on that refrain in the opening chapter of Romans 1, doesn't he? And he says that humanity has exchanged the truth of God for a lie to the point, and even in that first chapter, you see it clearly, the denial

that we're made in the image and likeness of God, right? We're to the point now we're so unhinged from the truth that we don't even know what a man is and we don't even know what a woman is. It's profound, and yet it's right there before us in Scripture. We have chosen to reject God's truth. Jesus, in that previous statement, when He said, I am the truth, John 8, right? The truth will set you free. Jesus is the way because Jesus is the truth.

Then thirdly, because He alone is the life. He alone is the life. If truth is a major theme, then life is an even greater theme because John uses the word "truth" 25 times. He uses the word "life" 37 times, often obviously tied to Jesus and the life that He gives. In Him, He said in the fourth verse, in Him was life and the life was the light of men. So it begins with that message, doesn't it? Sin brings death. Romans 3:23. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Nicodemus in the encounter, right? In John 3, Nicodemus, you've got to be born again. You've got to experience regeneration. You're dead, you've got to be made alive, born again. He stands at the tomb of Lazarus and makes that incredible declaration. I am the resurrection and the life. So, He is the way because He is the truth and He is the life.

Now look at this third thing. He alone can make this audacious claim. He's the only one that can make this claim. No one can come to the Father except by me. No one can come to the Father except by me. Paul agrees with that. In Colossians chapter one, when Paul wants to talk about the supremacy of Christ, he says in verse 16: For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. I mean, that's the supremacy of Christ, isn't it? He alone can make this claim.

So, you have a positive statement, right? Verse six, the positive part of it is, I am the way because I'm the truth because I'm the life. The negative statement is, no one, no one, without exception, no one comes to the Father but through me.

Now listen, nobody cares if you say Jesus is a way. Nobody cares. If you say Jesus is a way to God, nobody cares. Nobody cares if you say Jesus is your way to God, right? Okay, Jesus is your way to God. Nobody cares if you say that. But you cannot say Jesus is the only way to God. That you can't say. In an inclusive, pluralistic, syncretistic, individualistic, consumeristic, intolerant world that we live in, you cannot say that Jesus is the only way.

So, let's just look very briefly at these last three things regarding the nature of the claim. The nature of the claim, because in response to my saying, as Jesus Himself says that He's the only way, the responses to this are generally threefold. First of all, regarding the nature of the claim, someone says, this is totally arrogant. It's arrogant for anybody to say that. And the reason, of course, they say that is because in the minds of most people, all religions are equal. And the reason that all religions are equal is because all religions are viewed as being true, right? You choose your way. I'll choose my way. Let him choose his way. Let her choose her way.

The problem is, when you do a study of comparative religions, they say contradictory things, don't they? So, they can't all be true, but in our world, it doesn't really matter. Because there is no such thing as absolute truth. Even in that regard, our world is comfortable with that. Even if there are irreconcilable differences between the different religions of the world, it doesn't matter.

But here's our response. It's not our claim. It's not our claim. It's the claim that Jesus made. We're not claiming this ourselves. We're simply telling you what it is that Jesus has said. Jesus made this claim. It's the whole purpose of John's gospel. Listen to it. These things I'm writing to you that you would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you might have life in his name.

Now, lest you think that's a problem, it's not. Because here's a self-defined liberal preacher, okay? I just found this and thought it was amazingly applicable. He's preaching out of John 14 in verse six. And this is what he's shared with his congregation. He says, and I quote, "I point this out because while some would say John 14:6 is foundational to Christian belief, Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not mention that Jesus ever said these words." So, he says that means one of four possible things. "It means that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were not aware that Jesus said this." Very highly unlikely. "They were aware that Jesus said it but chose not to include it. The claim that Jesus said was disputed so they chose not to include it. Jesus never actually said this. While we don't know for sure which of the four options listed above is correct." Actually, we do. "One thing we do know for sure is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke felt that the story of Jesus was complete without Jesus ever saying I am the way, the truth, and the

life. In other words, 75% of the gospel writers did not feel that what Jesus said in John 14:6 was essential to telling the story of Jesus." He said to his congregation, "So it's okay if you don't think this teaching is essential to the story either." That's how you just move away from the absolute truth of what Jesus taught.

Secondly, people say, it's not only arrogant, it's narrow-minded. How narrow-minded of you to believe this way. Well, truth does kind of have a way, doesn't it, of being narrow-minded. I never had a math teacher look at my math paper and say, Carlon, that's close. Okay, that's going to be fine. It's wrong but it's close. No, we don't do that. When we enter fields like math and science and engineering and fields of technology and a host of other things, we don't ever operate on the viewpoint, the mindset that one way is being too narrow-minded. We have to open our minds up to so much more. Of course not. Truth is by definition narrow, isn't it?

And in addition to that, we would say Christianity is both inclusive or exclusive and inclusive. That's the beauty of what we're reading here, right? Christianity is exclusive. John 14:6 is exclusive. Jesus does say he's the only way, the only truth and the only life. There's one way. Jesus makes it clear. There's one way to God. There's one way to know that your relationship to God is the way it needs to be. You can't find that in Islam. You can't find that in Mohammed. You can't find that in Buddha. You can't find that in Hinduism. You can't find that in Charles Taze Russell and Jehovah Witness. You can't find that in Joseph Smith and Latter Day Saints. You can't.

But it's not only exclusive. It's inclusive. So yes, we do say Jesus by his own words says he's the only way. But the invitation is to everyone to come, right? Matthew 11, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. I love that the gospel story is exclusive. Jesus is the only way. But I love the fact that we can share it with everybody because in that sense, it's totally inclusive.

Then lastly, people would say you're so intolerant, wouldn't they? You're so intolerant. Well, it can be, but it's not intended to be. It can be intolerant depending on how it's messaged, right? I mean, we all know that there are Christians who are not very nice. They're unkind. They're mean spirited. They are maybe arrogant. But that's not God's intent for us. We're to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. We're to always speak the truth but to speak it in love.

So yeah, I guess you could read this and say, that sounds really intolerant, but it's not intended to be that way because it is to be a message that is spoken from one sinner to another, from one beggar to simply sharing the good news. We would ultimately say true Christianity preserves both tolerance and the truth. It's both of those things, isn't it? There is the reality that we have both of those at the same time.

Jesus offers the only answer to the most important and basic question that we can ever ask. How can I be certain that my relationship to God is what it should be? Well, our takeaway is simply this. In Jesus, we know the way. In Jesus, we know the truth. In Jesus, we have eternal life. Jesus is all that we need and Jesus is enough.

Christianity is the only message that brings that sense of truth and that sense of hope. Christianity is the only message that's not saying to you, here's a list of things that you need to do in order to make it to whatever heaven looks like. No, Christianity says we come, acknowledge that we've sinned, that Jesus alone is the one who has resolved that sin problem, and we believe and we have the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we're thanking you again this morning for your goodness to us, your kindness, this glorious gospel that you've given to us to share with the world that we live in. We pray that we will be tellers of that word, tellers of that truth, sharers of that gospel because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Father, I pray that again, by your Spirit, you would open hearts this morning to understand and receive this wonderful news, to know that we can be in a right relationship with you, that we will live with you forever. We thank you for our Savior and all that he has done for us in Jesus' name, amen.