

Come and See, Pt. 7
The Place and The Way
John 14: 1-7

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When I first came alive to Christ, there was a new Bible out. *The Way* was the illustrated version of the *Living Bible*, a fresh translation like nothing we had ever heard. It pulsed with life. My sometimes childhood nemesis and sometimes best friend Danny Stewart had a copy that was just the New Testament. It was called *Reach Out*. As usual, I envied what Danny had. This time because I thought the girl on the cover of *Reach Out* was a lot cuter than the girl on *The Way*! But then I guess that wasn't really the point of having the Living Bible. The purpose of having *The Way* was to get know Jesus *the way*, the truth and the life.



I loved the recent movie *Jesus Revolution* because it reminded me of the exuberance we felt as young Christians. The hippies of the late sixties had tried to find a way into

freedom and truth. Drugs, free love and no rules offered ever diminishing returns. Life lived by the cry of “Free Yourself” created only deepening bondage *to* self. The hippies came to Jesus by the thousands to find a way, a true way, out of the pit of self and into an everlasting life that begins right now. The raised arm with a finger pointing upwards became the new rebel cry, “One way! There’s one way out of death and into life, out of bondage and into freedom. One way. Jesus.”

A few years later, the Jesus revolution reached the suburbs. Friends in my youth group connected to Christ, and then shared him with me. We found what it was like to be lit up with a sense of everlasting life. To hold a Bible and feel in your bones, “This is truth; this is life.” We caught fire.



And we felt so joyfully bonded to every other believer. I can remember standing with my youth group at the bus station as we saw off a fellow Christian who had come to town. Arms raised, fingers pointed high. “One way,” we said as the bus pulled out. He said through the window, “One way. Jesus!” For we had truly experienced how Jesus is the way to the Father. He is the way to life. He’s both the path and the destination. He’s the way home and he *is* home.

I’ve never lost a link to those early days of my youthful fervor. Jesus as “The Way” means more to me than ever before. As early as the time of Paul’s conversion on the Damascus Road, the movement of those belonging to Jesus was called the Way, by both believers and unbelievers. The Way is a profound yet simple expression of what being connected to Jesus is all about.

For at the core, Christ is about an invitation to change. He’s about the dawning of freedom. We don’t have to stay stuck where we are. We don’t have to stay stuck *as* we are. We don’t have to stay mired in shame, wracked with guilt, wandering in futility and just plain sick of ourselves. We can

move from where we are. We can move into him. Jesus offers us freedom to move along a way of life, hope and peace. He issues an invitation to join him. To change roads from one way of life to another through walking in his way, *the Way*.

In our passage today, Jesus offers his disciples both a place and a way to get there. It is the last night before his crucifixion. Jesus tells them that he is going away, and they won't be able to follow him. He's talking about his death, but they don't understand that. They think he's just going some other place, only without them. They're far from home; he's their leader; they don't want to be left. So Jesus speaks a word of comfort. "Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also into me. In my Father's house are many rooms...I go to prepare a place for you...Then I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

Jesus tells them he's leaving them and going to his Father's house. He means the spiritual realm. To the "place" where God dwells. But he's only going to be gone a little while. He's going away to his Father's place in order to get a place ready for them in the same homestead. "I'm going home to my Father's house to get a room ready for you. My homeland is going to be your homeland. My Father's house will be your house. Because I'll come back for you. And we can be together always."

This is a passage we read often at funerals. It reminds us that life does not end with death in this world. There is a place to which we will go, where we will be reunited with Jesus and one another eternally. That's true, and it's a lovely vision. But that's not all this passage is about. The Way of Christ is not just about getting safe passage to heaven. Jesus has a place for us in his Father's house that we can experience *right now*. In this world, at this time.

Jesus would soon pass through the horrible torture of the cross and plunge into the deep waters of death, lost to the world, away from his Father's house, away from all love and light. But his Father would raise him on Easter morning. Jesus would return to life. The same Jesus, but different. Jesus risen is a new kind of human being. He is man remade. He's the new Adam. The restart of the human race. He is man restored and glorified.

The first place Jesus prepares for us is the place within us where his Holy Spirit can now dwell. By his faithful life and death, Jesus did what no person had done before. He lived what we were all meant to be. He lived a life of communion with his Father and absolute love for others. Now he wants to share that new kind of life he accomplished. He wants to make us new, like he is, so that we too can be a place where his Spirit can live.

Paul wrote, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone. The new has come” (2 Cor. 5: 17). The place Jesus prepares for us starts now. For the Spirit finds a place in our hearts when we look to Jesus in faith. He comes to dwell in us and we are taken into the life of God. We get washed clean. We get freed from all that was binding us. We receive power to change, to grow, to live. We receive a mission that gives our lives purpose. We get sent to love and that becomes our greatest joy. We get off the path that winds endlessly around ourselves. We get onto the Way of Jesus, the new and living Way.

That can seem almost too good to be true. It can seem very, very far from the road we are on right now. Pastor, if you only knew what I’ve done. If you only knew what I am doing, thinking, feeling, you’d know this Way of Jesus is a long way from where my life is. I don’t think I can ever get over to that other road. I don’t think there’s time for me to get it together and live in a new way.



Maybe it’s because he was first, but I remember so vividly the day our eldest son first walked. It was the Thanksgiving holiday, and we were at Rhonda’s parents. Micah waked up early, so I got up with him while the house was still sleeping. I was sitting on the floor with him. Micah pulled himself up by the couch. He was a few feet away from me. He looked at me with a question in his eyes. I held out

my hands and looked back at him with a smiling “Yes!” He grinned, and let go of the couch. He wobbled for a second, then walked into my arms. It was all I could do not to shout the whole house awake. “He did it! He walked! Right to me!” I was as proud as if he’d leapt the Grand Canyon. Even though we were on a carpet and Micah was just a little ways from me. If he’d tottered I’d have caught him. He took just a few steps. But those steps changed him forever. He’d found his balance. He was now a walker. The pathways of the world were open to him.

The Father’s house is so very close to each one of us. The way of Jesus is just the tiniest steps of faith away. We may be as lost as lost can be, hurtling down a road that seems to have no exit, with no brakes and the bridge out ahead. But there *is* an exit. It’s just one tiny turn toward Jesus. The place he has for you is as near as your next breath. So Paul tells us, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart...because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10: 8-9). The broad way that leads to destruction seems so inevitable. The little path of faith seems so hard to get to, so easy to miss, so insignificant to follow. But it’s just right here. There is an exit from the road you’re on, and it’s actually an entrance to the beautiful Way of life in Christ.

The place Christ has for you is as near as your next breath, if you will breathe in his Holy Spirit by turning towards him. Imagine you’re a little one standing up, holding onto the couch. You look out and see Christ Jesus smiling at you. He’s holding out his arms. So close. You let go. You’re wobbling. This giving up control is scary. But you don’t grab the couch. You want to get to Jesus. You take a tiny step, there’s no going back. Then all of a sudden you’re walking, right into his arms. And you feel him gather you to himself. You have a place in his Father’s house. Right now. As he holds you, he says, “That where I am, you may be also. That starts now, little one. It lasts forever. I am the way and truth and the life.” One little step, from wherever you are, can put you on a whole new path. Start towards him. That’s rising with Jesus on Easter Day.