

“The Ultimate GPS”

Life is a Highway; Read the Map – part #6

John 14:1-14

You are in the right place this morning. You are not here by accident. Look at the people around: they love you, they appreciate you, and they are here to worship God with you. Your presence matters to them, to me, and especially to God. Give God glory for bringing us all together this morning.

Would you please pray with me? Lord, if you have something to tell us this morning, we are ready to listen. Look through us, test our hearts, show us anything about ourselves that we need to change. Show us your eternal way, Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.

Is there anyone in the room who likes getting lost? Seriously, this may sound strange, but when I am traveling to a new place, I like to get out and explore, and if I find myself unexpectedly turned around, I experience a sense of adventure trying to figure out my way back home. It’s a challenge, and as long as being lost doesn’t last too long, it can be kind of fun.

What do you do when you are lost? You look for landmarks. Last month, my parents and I were walking one morning in Alaska with our guide, Dwight, on a road that supposedly led to a little cabin. I say supposedly, because about half-way there, we decided to turn around and head back. As luck would have it, Mom and I got separated from my dad and Dwight, and we ended up on a different road, with no map and no guide. All we knew was that our hotel was on the lake. So we looked for the lake, and when we found it, we followed the shoreline it back to the hotel. Easy peasy, lemon squeezy.

Finding your way is easy when you can use landmarks. You could say, “Go four miles and turn left,” but it’s always better to give directions like, “Go four miles and turn left at the big red barn.” Even better, you can say, “If you see the airport, you’ve gone too far.”

What is fascinating to me about modern GPS is that these devices work using “landmarks” in outer space. Dozens of satellites, flying around at high speed, make up a network of landmarks to help your little smart phone or GPS calculate where you are. If you can’t get a clear signal from enough satellites, you can’t determine your position, and that means, you can’t find your way.

Our Father in heaven has given us “landmarks” that we can follow in life as well. Some are really good: the Bible, our parents, our teachers, wise friends, our pastors, and other role models who help us calculate our position and where we are headed. Like GPS, one landmark is insufficient, but the combination of several usually indicates reliable information. Think about it: it’s one thing if a good friend gives you advice, but if seven friends all tell you the same thing, how much more likely are you to listen?

But there are many times in life when we do feel lost, alone, and the landmarks are far and few between. Things get us off track – unemployment, arguments, grief, frustration with family, work, even the church – and they cloud our vision, obscure our points of reference, and we end up lost. Even this week I had a difficult conversation that didn’t go my way. I felt pretty down and more than a little disappointed and lost. We’ve all been there.

Fortunately, we have the Ultimate GPS – God’s Promised Savior.

When Jesus said these famous words, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” he was speaking to a group of people who felt lost. His disciples were

worried. Jesus had walked with them for three years, and now he spoke about leaving them. At the Last Supper, the disciples were full of questions, and they felt life was spinning out of control. Peter had just asked Jesus, “Where are you going? Why can’t I follow you now?” (John 13:36-37) Thomas followed up with the question, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5)

I love the disciples’ honesty and their questions. I especially I love Thomas. He says exactly what everyone else is thinking but is too afraid to say. “Lord, how do we find the way without you?” Thomas wanted clear directions. He wanted more than a map; he wanted a GPS, a laser compass and some really big road signs.

Jesus gave him, all of his disciples, all of us, exactly what we needed. Jesus answered with authority: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) That seems like a strange answer. If the disciples were asking for literal directions, they didn’t get them. There was no “Go four miles and turn at the huge neon flashing arrow that says, ‘Jesus said go this way!’”

There are so many times in life when we want specific answers to hard questions. We find it difficult to rest in the mystery of it all. We want clarity, black and white, 100% money-back guarantees, fool-proof contracts, explicit step-by-step directions. But what we really need is relationship.

So what did Jesus mean when he said, “I am the way”?

Let me offer this quote in response:

“[Jesus] wanted his friends to realize that **life is a journey and not a destination**; that the heart must be set upon those matters of character which are eternal and not upon those matters of sensation which pass away.”¹

“Life is a journey, not a destination.” Like us today, the disciples were caught up in instant gratification. They wanted God’s kingdom to come right away. They wanted to see Israel delivered from oppression. They wanted to see God “fix” everything and make Jesus king. Their goals were very one-dimensional, temporary, superficial, and short-sighted. By contrast, every time Jesus preached a message to his disciples (and by extension, to us), Jesus was concerned with matters of the heart. Internal matters. Eternal matters. Things like, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” That’s not a one-and-done philosophy. Or “Give to God what is God’s.” That is a life-philosophy, not a one-time thing for your year-end taxes. Or “Take up your cross and follow me.” That is not something you do one weekend in the summer. Jesus taught that he was the way, because the way is a life-long expedition. And if you get lost on the journey, you need the heavenly GPS, God’s Promised Savior, to redirect you.

Jesus is our G.P.S. That is why the author of Hebrews says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2) What matters most is not having all the answers; what matters is having a trustworthy, faithful, never-failing guide.

We are living in a world that is looking for direction. Spiritual questioning is at an all-time high. Pastor Tom did a bible study this summer on the book of Revelation and the end times – the room was packed. People who do not and

¹ Lynn H. Hough, article in The Christian Advocate, 1920. <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/08/31/life-journey/>

never will attend church want to know about the meaning of life. They are looking in so many places – online, in self-help books, in the media. They seek direction in politics, in fame and fortune, in accumulating possessions. We all do. But we won't find the direction we need in those things. Not for eternity.

Think about the threefold promise Jesus gave. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The way – because we have become lost. The truth – because we hear so many lies. The life – because we are sick and tired of spiritual death, as well as physical. We don't need Google maps. We need a Savior who will walk beside us.

Christianity is not about a destination. There is no one in this room who can say, “Finally, I've reached perfection. I don't have to do anything anymore.” If you think, “I'm saved; doesn't matter what I do now, as long as I go to heaven when I die,” you have missed the whole point of the gospel! Christianity is about a journey. That's why Jesus said “I am the way.” He didn't say, “I am the final stop.” When you confess Jesus as Lord, your heavenly GPS does not beep “You have arrived at your destination.” Actually, Jesus says, “Follow me.” And: “Turn here. Go there. Serve here. Give there. Pray. Pray some more. Pray all the time.” The GPS never turns off, and I hope you never put the speaker on mute.

Jesus is the way – the way for a family to heal from hurt and brokenness. The way for a world to heal from bitterness and fear. The way for an addict to recover from substance abuse. The way for a church to resurrect itself. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He is truly all we need.

As a church, do we believe it? Do you hold this truth as a core value? Are we on a journey with Christ? Is it evident in our actions? In everything we say and do, are we focused on the Son of God? If we make this claim, that Jesus is

the way, the truth, and the life, then it should be obvious to everyone we meet. We should be crazy in love with our crazy-loving Creator. We are on a journey through life with the resurrected Son of God. Show some excitement! This is the crazy, windy road with the Holy Spirit, and everyone is invited! We should be excited to offer to share that journey with others.

Let Jesus be your way, your truth, and your life. There is no better direction, no better guide, no one who loves you more than Christ. Let's pray.

Memory verse

John 14:6 – “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Reflection questions

1. When have you been lost? How did you find your way back?
2. What spiritual questions do you hear people asking?
3. How is Jesus the way? The truth? The life? How would you explain these ideas to a non-Christian friend?
4. How does Jesus provide direction for you? How good are you at following?
5. Do you experience a thrill knowing Jesus is the way to the Father? How could you share that excitement? How could you grow that feeling?