

## **SERMON: John 14.1-6**

### **YOU KNOW THE WAY**

There was a time—probably years ago now—when the following scenario was played out every summer in old Chevy station wagons. (If you're not sure what a station wagon is, ask your parents. Or your grandparents.) Mom would be sitting in the passenger seat, quietly reading a book or maybe just admiring the scenery. The kids in the back seat—or if they were lucky, in the rear-facing way back seat—would be goofing around, making faces at each other, or reading road signs in the most unusual accents they could think of. Dad would be driving. But then the car would slow and gradually pull to the side of the road. Mom would look up and say, quietly, "This doesn't look right." The kids would shout out, "Where are we?" And Dad would pull out the map from the glove compartment, unfold it seven or eight times, and say, "I know where we're going. I just have to get back to the main road..."

This is what it was like to be lost before the age of cell phones and GPS. I'm guessing it doesn't happen much anymore. At least, not with physical directions. We still find ourselves lost in other ways, though. Maybe we feel a bit lost when it comes to a job or a career—*What am I going to do with the rest of my life?* Maybe we could use some direction navigating through difficult family situations—*How can I peacefully and calmly address the tension with my parents?* Maybe we have a spiritual crisis that needs to be addressed—*God, why do I keep falling into these same damaging sins?*

In our sermon text this morning, the disciples were having a spiritual crisis, in a way. They were lost. That may seem somewhat odd, just like it might seem odd for someone to be physically lost today with cell phones and GPS and all the tools and devices we have. How could the disciples be lost? After all, they had Jesus, right there with them. And they knew him. They had been chosen by him and trained by him. They had been partners in ministry with him. They had seen him baptized in the Jordan River, when the voice of the Father boomed, "This is my Son, whom I love." They had watched him turn water into wine and call Lazarus out from a grave. And they had listened in Nazareth as he announced to the crowds in the synagogue that he was the Messiah, the one appointed to bring freedom to the prisoners and good news to the poor.

And yet, on this dark Thursday evening, they were lost and confused. From their perspective, Jesus had been acting strange. Within the last few hours, Jesus had washed their feet, told them that one of them would betray him, and even said that he would be with them only a **"little longer"** (Jn. 13:33). And so, it's understandable that the disciples would be reeling here. You can almost imagine them saying, "Hold on a second, Jesus, what's going on?!"

They were lost. They were confused and troubled. They were worried about their friend and their teacher. They were anxious about what was going to happen. And to cap it all off, they were sinners. Just like you and me. Sinners who struggle to trust. Sinners who have a weak faith at times. Sinners whose confidence in the Savior is sometimes shaken by hardship and trouble.

And this is what Jesus says to his troubled sinners.

**<sup>1</sup> "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup> You know the way to the place where I am going."**

They didn't even have to tell him how they were feeling. The disciples didn't have to come to Jesus and say, "Hey, can we talk? We're a little freaked out. You said one of us will betray you, another

will disown you, and you are going to be arrested, tried, and killed. And then you said you're leaving us. Alone." Jesus—true God and true man—knows exactly what they're thinking and feeling. He knows their fears and their worries.

And he knows yours, too. He knows that you wake up, and the pain in your joints and pain in your heart every day makes you doubt that he knows and cares for you. He knows that you are worried about your friend or your father who is approaching death. He knows that you are afraid—afraid of what others think of you at school, afraid to start the new job, afraid to stand up for your faith because of what it may cost. And he knows, too, that you have guilt that weighs you down, sins that you struggle with, weakness that causes you to even question God himself.

He knows. He knows the darkest problem in our lives: sin. The troubles and the problems in this life are difficult—no doubt about it. But our sin? It's downright deadly. Because sin is taking our eyes off our Savior. We do that when we take for granted his presence among us in the Word and the sacraments. We take our eyes off our Savior when we doubt not only his words of forgiveness, but also his promises to preserve and protect us throughout life. We take our eyes off our Savior when we paralyze ourselves with the fear being alone, the fear of not waking up tomorrow, the fear of being disappointed.

Taking our eyes off our Savior not only leaves us without comfort and confidence, but also leaves us lost and wandering, heading down the dead-end road of death. Jesus himself makes it clear: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (v. 6). Taking our eyes off our Savior means we cannot get to the Father. Our doubts, fears, and worries—our sin—blocks the way to the Father.

So what do we do?

**6...“I am the way and the truth and the life.”**

*We do nothing. Jesus is the way.*

The *WAY* walked the path you could not. He humbled himself before God's holy law, willingly obeying each and every command for you. He resisted the temptations of the devil—temptations to worry and doubt and fear—and trusted his Father, knowing that his will meant salvation for you. The *TRUTH* legitimately earned God's favor with his perfect life. And yet, when the scales of justice were read, he still was found guilty, because Jesus' shoulders were sagging with the sins of the whole world. And so, the *LIFE*...died...

...and then he rose again in beautiful assurance that all the work he had done was accepted by God. For you. He ascended, where he is doing the very same thing he told his disciples he would be doing: preparing a home in heaven. For you. You know your Savior. You know he has forgiven you. You know that your name was written on his hands and is etched into the door of your room in the Father's house. You know the Way.

Jesus' words to his disciples—both that night and this morning—are a beautiful call to trust in God's perfect promises. "You know the way. You know the promises I have made to you. Trust me. I've got you." Jesus was completing God's perfect plan of salvation, giving you the confidence of an eternal home in heaven.

What wonderful comfort this is: this life, this world...it's not your home. The sorrow and the sadness your Savior knows you feel now is short-lived. Because the same one who knows your pain, who set the world on its foundations, who allows both the sunshine and the rain in your life, has had you on his heart from eternity and is preparing a place for you where the sorrow and sadness cannot reach. The confusion and doubt and uncertainty of this life is only temporary. Because the same one who took your burden of sin and marched into hell itself to proclaim victory over death, has promised

to come back for you. The loneliness and isolation that burdens you now is only a momentary illusion. Because the way, the truth, and the life is with you now and will take you to be with him forever.

But you're not there yet, are you?

Jesus' words to his disciples also bring you the comfort you need when you face all those troubles and problems in your life. And that's important, because they don't just magically disappear, even though your registration for your ultimate home has been confirmed.

And how often are you reminded of that? How often do you get another debilitating blow from this world of sorrow and sickness and pain? Every time you read the headlines on your phone or in the paper, and you see a world groaning with tornadoes and earthquakes. Every time you hear the sirens flash down your street, and the crime and the rage and the violence spread into your schools and neighborhoods. Every time the bank account dwindles, the bills aren't paid, the car breaks down, and the kids are sick and need to see the doctor. Every time cancer strikes and age runs its devastating course, and your beloved husband or your loving mother passes away. This world is so far removed from our Father's house that it's hard to even imagine something different. How can one even find a way through this troubled life?

**<sup>1</sup> "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."**

It's significant what Jesus *doesn't* say. He does not tell you to buck up in the face of adversity and fight through your difficulties with determination. He does not offer platitudes like, "Oh, it'll be okay." Nor does he promise that your lives as Christians will be pleasant, easy, successful, or stress-free. No, the one who is the *WAY*, the *TRUTH*, and the *LIFE* gives you the *TRUTH* about the *WAY* through this *LIFE*.

And this is it:

**<sup>1</sup> "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."**

The one who knows all your cares and anxieties is the one who calls you to cast them upon him. And the Word of God incarnate—the *TRUTH* himself—gives you beautiful promises about how he handles them. He promises to feed and clothe you just like he feeds the birds and clothes the lilies. He promises to hear and answer your prayers. He promises that his Word will give you a firm and steady foundation in the storms of this life. He promises that he will work out all your troubles and difficulties for your eternal good. He promises that he will never leave you, never forsake you, never abandon you. He will be with you always, even as he comes back to take you with him.

And because he makes promises...and because he keeps promises...and because he says you are safe in his care always...it really is okay. It really is.

You know the *WAY* to eternal life. You know the Savior who gives you the comfort of sins forgiven and the confidence of clear, unfettered access to your Heavenly Father. And you know the *WAY* through this life, too. Because the same Savior walks beside you, hears you, and blesses you with his presence and protection. And he gives you the confidence of coming back in glory to personally escort you from this life to eternal life.

You know the Way. It is Christ alone.

*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus! Amen.*