

John 11:17-27 – “I Am: the Way, the Truth, the Life”

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Intro: The old prayer book reminds us that “in the midst of life, we are in death,” meaning that though we live physically in this present world, we are entirely dead to the next world in our natural condition. The sin that entered the world in Eden has robbed us of the presence of God, the power of truth, and the life everlasting. We now find ourselves wondering where we came from, who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. “In the midst of life, we are in death.” We need a rescuer.

Proposition: Jesus has come to our rescue. He is the way to God, the truth of God, and the life of God, given to everyone who believes.

Billboard: (vv.13:36-38) Something About Ourselves
 (vv.14:1-4) Something About the Savior
 (vv.14:5-6) Something About Life

(vv.13:36-38) – Something About Ourselves – Our passage begins with a question from Peter: **John 13:36–38 - 36** *Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” 37 Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” 38 Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.* Peter’s question did not come out of nowhere. In the last six months before the cross, Jesus had said to His disciples on several occasion that He was going up to Jerusalem to suffer, and only days before had said to them plainly, **Matthew 26:2 2** *“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”* To understand Peter’s question, we must understand that Jesus’ disciples knew that He was going to His death somehow through the things that would happen to Him at this Passover. They didn’t understand how all this fit with their expectations concerning the Messiah however, so Peter’s question to Jesus was provoked by Jesus’ words a few moments before: **John 13:33 - 33** *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’* They knew, but they didn’t know. It was all confused in their minds, so Peter sought clarification: “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus did not answer him directly at this moment but reiterated what He had said a moment earlier but with a significant addition: “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” Peter, evidently expecting the answer to have been “To the cross,” perhaps, or “To my death,” responded with what one commentator has called, “The finest thing Peter ever said”¹ - **John 13:37 - 37** *Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”* He meant it, too. There is no doubt that Peter’s love for Jesus was sincere and that when he said he would lay his life down for Jesus, he genuinely believed he could do so. But Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself and responded: **John 13:38 - 38** ... *“Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.* Peter’s love was sincere, but it was wrapped in mere human flesh, and Peter believed himself capable of more than he was able to

¹ G. Campbell Morgan

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perform. In our natural condition, like Peter, we think we can do something heroic for God; that somehow, we can get God out of the dilemma he gets Himself into by loving us. We don't fully realize that the dilemma isn't God's but ours. Because Sin entered man in the Garden of Eden, consequences have followed that human beings simply can't reverse or even deflect. The door to God's presence is slammed shut, locked, and double-bolted from the inside. There is no well-intended heroism on our part that can ever unlock that door. It is bolted from the *inside*. Only God can unlock it. Man has been locked out of the Garden of God's presence because of our Sin. If we are going to get back in, God himself will have to unlock that door. Peter can't go with Jesus now – but after Jesus unlocks the door through His death, resurrection and ascension, Peter will be able to follow Him into God's presence, for that is where Jesus was going. Jesus had already said to Peter, “After I unlock the door, I'm going to give you the key and let you unlock it for others too (cf. Mt. 16:19).” The key is the Gospel, but there was no Gospel to proclaim until Jesus first unlocked the door to God's presence through His sacrifice.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] We are helpless to find our WAY back into God's presence on our own. Jesus must open a way for us.

[ILLUSTRATION] You may at some times have seen the famous painting of Jesus knocking on the door of man's heart, seeking entrance into man's presence. Did you notice that the door Jesus is knocking on has no door handle? The artist was conveying that the door can only be opened from the inside, and that the sinner must open the door to let the Savior in. It's a well-intentioned idea but, the artist got it exactly backwards. The figure on the outside knocking should be the sinner, for only the Savior on the inside can open the door to God's presence for him.

[APPLICATION] Peter thought that he could do something to help Jesus, but in reality it was only Jesus who could do something to help Peter. We can do nothing to find our way back into the presence of God, lost to man in the Garden. It is Jesus who has provided the way back through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Our part now is simply to respond to what He has already done for us. He has opened the door for us. He is the WAY back to God. Have you entered?

(vv.14:1-4) – Something About the Savior – Jesus' words to Peter naturally caused consternation both to Peter and all the listening disciples. Without pausing for a break in the conversation, Jesus proceeded to speak words of comfort to them: **John 14:1-4 - 1** “*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.*” Having exposed Peter's (and all the disciples') helplessness, Jesus then spoke three imperatives to them for the comfort of their hearts: **1** “*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.* Jesus gave three commands to His disciples that suggest certain actions in response: 1) “Take yourself in hand. Get a grip on your fears.” In Eden when Sin entered, the balance between what man knows and what man

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feels was destroyed and ever since men have been captives to their desires, fears, and emotions. This is not what God intended. God intended that men would rule over their emotions, conforming their acts to the truth God gave man to live by. So, the first thing Jesus said to His followers was, “Get a grip! Don’t let your life be run by your fears.” 2) *Believe in God*. To believe in God is to undo that lie with which Satan deceived our first parents in the Garden. Satan’s lie, still in full use today was, “You can’t trust what God says. Follow your heart instead.” Here Jesus was pointing His disciples back to the truth that God is always trustworthy and that all He has said can be counted on as truth. 3) *Believe also in me*. With this command, Jesus puts Himself firmly in equality with God the Father. To trust what Jesus says is to trust what God says as well, for Jesus came to say only what the Father told Him (cf. John 12:49). Having given these imperatives, Jesus now stated an indicative truth, and urged it upon His disciples based on His own character: **2** *In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?* Here Jesus frankly answered Peter’s question: “*Lord, where are you going*” by saying directly “I am returning to my father’s house.” Jesus was going to where Peter could not come until Christ’s work on the cross was complete. He was going back to the Father’s presence. Jesus attested to the truth of this statement by offering His own character as a witness; *If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?* Jesus was saying both to them and us, “Don’t you know me well enough by now to realize that I wouldn’t tell you I’m going to prepare a place for you there if you couldn’t come too?” Then, He followed this with another word of comfort: **3** *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also*. This is a promise Jesus gives to all who believe in Him: “I’m coming back for you. I’ll take you to live with me in my father’s house.” What a word of comfort for fearful hearts! He finished by saying, **4** *And you know the way to where I am going.*” Everything here is based on the truth of Jesus’ words attested to by the trustworthiness of Jesus’ character.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus is the TRUTH that brings us peace, overturning the lie of Satan in the Garden.

[ILLUSTRATION] Believing lies does nothing other than create confusion, suspicion, and conflict among men. Is it any wonder that our world is such a mess today? In the Garden, Satan overturned truth and replaced it with a lie in men’s minds and hearts: “God can’t be trusted. Follow your fallen heart instead.” The result is what we see all around us in our world today.

[APPLICATION] Jesus is God’s truth set before us. When we put our trust in Him, when we take as true all that He says, when we trust with all our hearts all that our Bibles tell us about Him, we overturn the work of Satan in the Garden. This is God’s requirement for things to be put right, for the damage done to men in the Garden to be overturned. It really isn’t hard to grasp: Jesus is the TRUTH. Have you put your trust in Him?

(vv.14:5-6) – Something About Life – As plain as these things may seem to you and me, the disciples were still wondering exactly what Jesus meant. Thomas spoke for all of them: **John 14:5 - 5** *Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the*

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way?” If you don’t know the destination, you can’t know the way! Ironically, they certainly did know the way. They just didn’t know that they knew! So, Jesus made things as plain as possible: **John 14:6 - 6** *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* This is one of the greatest statements in all of Scripture. In 13:36-38 Jesus revealed to us that He is the WAY back into the Father’s presence. In 14:1-4 Jesus revealed to us that He is the TRUTH that overturn’s Satan’s lie. Now Jesus adds plainly one more essential piece: He is the LIFE that was taken away from man by man’s fall in Eden. Ever since Eden we have been shutout of God’s presence. We live in darkness, ignorant of God. Because of this we make our tinpot deities who have eyes but cannot see; ears but cannot hear (cf. Ps. 115:5 w/ Jer. 5:21). We make our own gods and becoming what we behold, we find ourselves to be just like them. Ever since Eden we have been dominated by lies. Refusing to love the truth, we are forever ensnared by falsehoods (1 Thess. 2:10-11). Ever since Eden we have been dead in our trespasses and sins, devoid of spiritual life – unable to respond to the spiritual realities that exist beyond the material world. Into this darkness comes Jesus with a blinding ray of light: **John 14:6 - 6** *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Jesus reveals plainly in this statement that He is all we need: He is the WAY, He is the TRUTH, and He is the LIFE. No one can come to the Father any other way except through Him.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus is the way back into LIFE with the Father.

[ILLUSTRATION] There are many “all you need” statements. The Beatles told us that, “All you need is love.” Others say to us that “All you need is money.” Still others insist that “All you need is knowledge.” Love is good, money is helpful, and knowledge has its place, but in reality, all we really need is Life.

[APPLICATION] Jesus is the Way we need back into the Life sin took from us in Eden. Jesus is the Truth we need to overcome a world of lies. Jesus is the Life we need to live with God forever. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is all we need. Do you know Him?

Conclusion: The old prayer book reminds us that “in the midst of life, we are in death,” meaning that though we live physically in this present world, we are entirely dead to the next world in our natural condition. The sin that entered the world in Eden has robbed us of the presence of God, the power of truth, and the life everlasting. We now find ourselves wondering where we came from, who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. “In the midst of life, we are in death.” We need a rescuer and Jesus is the rescuer we need. God has provided all we need through His Son Jesus. Why wouldn’t you want the Him to be your rescuer too?