

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.

John 14:1-14

"If we substitute the "me" with who Jesus says "me" is - the "I am" that he begins with - we get: No one comes to the Father, except through the way, the truth, and the life."

Listed on The Text This Week, www.textweek.com: Contemporary Commentary, Studies, and Exegesis for the Gospel reading.

Year A

Season of Easter

Easter 5

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [John 14:1-14, The Message](#) or [John 14:1-14, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click here, [John 14:1-14](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "."

This passage and Psalm 23 are probably the most widely read passages at funeral or memorial services.

And no wonder. These words of Jesus address in a most personal and direct way our questions about death and what will happen next.

Jesus addresses his followers then as he addresses us now:

Do not be afraid

Note that the reason we should not be afraid is **NOT** because Jesus is going to magically make all the bad, no good, horrible circumstances go away - he **IS** still going to be arrested, tortured and executed. Rather, we are not to be afraid because these circumstances will not be the end of the story.

I love the way this passage presents the very human, natural, fears and questions of the disciples. A good title for a sermon would be, "Were It Not So?" precisely because that is **OUR** question. Is that so? What does happen after we die?

In a few words, Jesus paints a wonderful word picture of the life to come: my Father's house; many rooms; a prepared place; a prepared way to get there; a trusted guide; not being left alone to find our own way; ending with being with Jesus again.

But as usual, the passage does not leave us without inner, spiritual work of our own to do. Namely, to trust and to believe INTO (not "in") Jesus:

And you know the way to the place where I am going ...

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If you know me, you will know my Father also

(Aside: The NRSV translation of "believe in" would be better as "believe into." That is, be bonded with Jesus; not "accept concepts about Jesus." And "believe" is better translated as "trust" precisely because the underlying Greek word is more about a quality of relationship with Jesus than it is about ideas about Jesus.)

That sneaky word "And" as in, "And you know the way," implies a pre-existing knowledge on the part of the disciples. Jesus is not telling them anything new; they already know: **And** you know ...

There then begins a series of questions from the disciples that demonstrate they do not in fact know; and a series of responses from Jesus that demonstrate that in fact he has already showed them.

Thomas is the first to make a statement and then ask the question that is our question: How can we know the way?

Jesus' response to this question is one that has caused enormous suffering and harm through the centuries.

But I think we have not read his response for the plain statement of truth that it is. Jesus first says:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life

And then he says:

No one comes to the Father, except through me

Now, if we simply substitute for the "me" in the second statement with who Jesus says "me" is - the "I am" in the first statement, we get:

No one comes to the Father, except through the way, the truth, and the life.

That statement, I think, is **NOT** grounds for slaughtering non-believers in Jesus, or forced baptisms, or worrying that non-believers have been condemned to everlasting damnation. It is, I think, a plain statement of the simple truth that the life to come will be a way of truth and life - and thank God for that. And, since Jesus has said that he will come and take us to himself, we can trust that we will not be abandoned and left on our own to find this impossible-for-us-to-be-nothing-but-truth-and-life way.

Aside: I appreciate that John very likely meant us to read this passage in the very exclusive way it has been read for the past 2,000 years: No one gets to heaven except through Jesus; but I don't buy that is in keeping with the spirit of Jesus' own life and teachings. And as I've just pointed out, that interpretation doesn't even accord with the logic of the two statements themselves.

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Philip's request:

Show us the Father and we will be satisfied

is again a statement for us: we would like to see God, and THEN we would be satisfied. (Cue the Rolling Stones, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction.")

And again, Jesus' response points us to what we already have experienced and know. There is no further, additional, special, secret, "insider," knowledge / wisdom / insight / enlightenment that is needed. It don't get any better than this folks!

And note again, the repetition of the play on the themes "believe in" and "is in." Have I already mentioned that "believe in" needs to be "believe into?" Bond into. Trust into.

Unfortunately, "whatever you ask in my name," does not mean that tacking on "in Jesus name we pray," means that we will get whatever we just asked for.

The phrase "in my name" should be translated, "in my honour," so that it would read:

whatever you ask for that honours me will be granted

Darn that Jesus. Just when it sounds like he is offering us a "Get Out of Jail Free" card; a free ticket to all the things we want simply by asking "in his name;" it turns out he is asking us to align our needs / requests to be in honour of him / worthy of him. So much the Mercedes Benz I've been praying for! Janis and Jesus must surely be sighing - or weeping - or both over all of the dishonouring prayers that are offered in Jesus' name.

This is a passage both of great comfort and of great challenge.

David Ewart,

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Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John, see link below, pages 229-231.

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

John 14:1-14 (NRSV)

¹ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. 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, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not

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know where you are going. How can we know the way?"⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

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John 14:1-14 (The Message)

¹ "Don't let this throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me."² There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you?³ And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live.⁴ And you already know the road I'm taking."

⁵ Thomas said, "Master, we have no idea where you're going. How do you expect us to know the road?"

⁶ Jesus said, "I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me."⁷ If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You've even seen him!"

⁸ Philip said, "Master, show us the Father; then we'll be content."

⁹ "You've been with me all this time, Philip, and you still don't understand? To see me is to see the Father. So how can you ask, 'Where is the Father?'"¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you aren't mere words. I don't just make them up on my own. The Father who resides in me crafts each word into a divine act.

¹¹ "Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can't believe that, believe what you see—these works."¹² The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it.

¹³ From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I'll do it. That's how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it.¹⁴ Whatever you request in this way, I'll do.

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