

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/14/93
John 14:5-7 "Black and White Truth for a Gray World"

Intro: We live in an age of relativism. The buzzwords for our day are "diversity" and "acceptance" and "tolerance." In actuality, a battle is raging. The enemy is subtle, and his strategy crafty. We are being bombarded by a message that is destroying the very foundation of this country. You know what it is. "There are no absolutes. Truth is relative. What's right for you may not be right for me." In short, we live in a gray world. And it seems to be getting grayer every day.

Illust:

Q: How then do we live as Christians?

A: More than ever, if we are to survive, we need to cut through the gray scenery, and reaffirm God's black and white truth. That exactly is the counsel we find as we turn to John 14.

We're going to delve into John 14:5-7 this morning, as we continue our current series in Jesus' Upper Room Discourse. Before we do that, I want to highlight for you 4 unchanging truths revealed in vv 1-14. I remind you these are the words of Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke with authority. He did not offer suggestions or opinion. He spoke in black and white absolutes. Notice 4.

1. There is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be avoided (1-4).
2. There is only one way to heaven (5-7).
3. Jesus Christ is God (8-11).
4. There is power through prayer (12-14).

These are 4 unchanging truths. The passing of time has not, nor will not, alter their validity. They are absolutes.

Perhaps you're wondering, "Should we claim to have absolute truth?"

That's a legitimate question. After all, in our society, when someone makes an absolute claim, he's labeled as being bigoted and narrow-minded and intolerant. So we'd better have solid grounds for holding onto unchanging truth.

Should we claim to have absolute truth?

To answer that question, we want to investigate a most interesting conversation Jesus had with a man named Thomas. Do you know what we'll find?

Proposition: As we listen to Jesus' words in vv 5-7, we're going to see 2 unchanging absolutes associated with Jesus.

- I. Jesus made an Absolute Claim (5-6).
 - A. It was Inclusive.
 1. I am the way.
 2. I am the truth.
 3. I am the life.
 - B. It was Exclusive.
- II. Jesus made an Absolute Call (7).

These words are critical for us. The air we breathe is saturated with relativism. It's imperative that we come to grips with the absolutes Jesus announced to His followers in John 14.

I. Jesus made an Absolute Claim (5-6).

V 5 "Thomas saith unto Him..."

You remember the setting. Jesus and the 11 apostles are in the Upper Room. Judas is already gone, his wicked plot to betray Jesus in motion. Jesus had just shocked the men with three disturbing announcements. He was going to leave them. One of them would betray Him. And Peter was going to deny Him 3 times.

That news broke their hearts. So Jesus spoke words of comfort in vv 1-4, "Let not your heart be troubled." He told them about heaven. He told them that though He was soon going to leave them, via the cross and the empty tomb and ascension, He was going to return for them.

Then He said in v 4, "And where I go you know, and the way you know."

When Thomas heard that, he couldn't contain himself. You get the idea he blurted out, "Wait a minute Lord. We don't follow You. We don't know where You're going. So how could we know the way?"

Woa! How dare Thomas contradict the Master Teacher! Jesus said, "You know where I'm going." (4) Thomas said, "No we don't!" (5)

I marvel at the patience of the Lord Jesus. He could have blown Thomas away. After all, in just a few hours, all hell would literally break loose against Jesus. Jesus needed comfort. But He didn't think of Himself. He thought of others, in this case Thomas.

By the way, there's really no such thing as a "bad" question, as long as it's asked in sincerity. Thomas's question led to a response that has become one of the most famous verses in the Bible.

V 6 "Jesus saith unto him..."

Now that's an amazing claim! Ponder it with me. Two things stand out...

A. Jesus' Claim was Inclusive.

V 6 "I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life."

One of the most important things to notice in v 6 is the articles. Jesus did not say, "I am a way, a source of truth, and a possible way to approach life." His claim is staggering. It's comprehensive. It's inclusive. It's actually a triple claim.

Quote: D.A. Carson (27) "It is an amazing statement. 'I am the way'--spoken by one whose way was the ignominious shame of a Roman cross, the death of despised and debased criminals. 'I am the truth'--spoken by one about to be condemned by lying witnesses, one who was generally not believed by his own people, by his own family. 'I am the life'--uttered by one whose battered corpse would shortly rest in a dark tomb, sealed up by the authorities."

What a claim!

1. I am the way.

The term "way" is significant in the Bible. The Scriptures teach that man's way is corrupt because of sin. Gen 6:12 "And God looked upon the earth; and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his WAY upon the earth." Isa 53:6a "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own WAY."

To sinners who have taken the wrong way, Jesus announced, "I am the way." The way of Jesus was the cross. The way of disciples is Jesus. In fact, in the book of Acts, how were Christians identified? As followers of "the way" (Acts 19:23; 22:4).

Q: Did you ever wonder why the world is antagonistic towards the church?

A: It's the same reason it was so antagonistic towards Christ. His claim is so exclusive. The world will tolerate someone claiming to offer "a" way, an alternative lifestyle. But "the" way? That's a different story.

Illust: We hate the words, "Let me show you THE way to do that..."

Listen. Jesus does not merely SHOW the way. He IS the way. He is the way from God to man (that is, all divine blessings come through Him). And He's the way from man to God. The only way.

2. I am the truth.

Please notice He didn't say He "spoke" truth. He said He IS the truth. Many a man could say, "I taught you the truth." Only one could rightly say, "I am the truth."

In fact, we could insert the word "because" in v 6, and catch the thrust of what Jesus is saying. "I am the way BECAUSE I am the truth and the life."

If Jesus is the truth, why did people reject Him? Why do they still reject Him? For one simple reason, "Men love darkness rather than light (Jn 3:19)." The devil is the source of lies (Jn 8:44). The natural man love lies rather than the truth.

3. I am the life.

In his classic, Imitations of Christ, Thomas a Kempis wrote, "Without the way there is no going. Without the truth there is no knowing. Without the life there is no living." (in Bruce, 299)

Jesus is the life. He alone is the source of life which is truly life.

Illust: Have you ever been lost driving your car? Two weeks ago, I was in downtown Akron trying to find The Chapel. I drove around and saw a lot of streets. Finally I stopped and asked a guy for directions. He was helpful. But his directions were typical. "Go to the second light, take a left. Go 2 blocks, turn right. Go a little ways, turn again. Then turn again." (not exactly!) I got there. But you know what really would have been helpful. Suppose the guy had said, "Follow me, I'll take you there myself."

That's what Jesus does for us. He doesn't give us advice and directions. He doesn't tell us about the way. He IS the way!

Application: Let's be frank. It's impossible to cling to both Christ and the pluralism of our day. It's absurd to say, "I'm a Christian. I believe in Jesus. I follow Jesus, BUT I think there are other ways to God."

C. S. Lewis was right. There are only 3 approaches to Jesus Christ. One, you can say He was a Liar. When He said, "I am THE way," you could assert that He was being deceptive. Secondly, you could say that Jesus was a Lunatic. That is, yes He claimed to be the only way to God, and yes He really believed it was so, but He was deluded. He was self-deceived. Or thirdly, you could say that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord. He claimed to be the only way to God because that indeed is the case. As the Lord of the universe, He is indeed THE way, THE truth, and THE life.

You see, v 6 cuts right through the sham of nominal Christianity that's so prevalent in our day. Churches this morning are full of people who give lip-service to Jesus, yet at the same time cling to the relativistic values of society. Listen friends, when a person does that, he may have religion, but he does NOT have genuine Christianity.

Quote: "He never wrote a book, and yet all the libraries..."

Tran: Jesus claim was inclusive.

B. Jesus' Claim was Exclusive.

V 6 "No man comes to the Father, but by Me."

That is an exclusive claim. NO man comes to the Father but by Me. Jesus did not suggest that He came to offer yet another possible way to enjoy eternal life. No. He said, "If you want to go to heaven where My Father is, you have to go through Me." What does that claim imply about all other religions? Any religious system that attempts to get to God other than through Jesus Christ is what? False. Illegitimate.

You say, "That's a pretty bold claim to make! That will offend people!"

The message of the gospel of Christ is offensive.

Peter, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12)."

Paul, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed (Gal 1:8)."

Illust:

Tran: There's the first absolute. Jesus made an Absolute Claim.

II. Jesus made an Absolute Call (7).

V 7 "If ye had known me, ye should have..."

That's a pretty puzzling statement, at first. "IF you had known Me." Hadn't the disciples already "known" Jesus? Yes. They knew Him well enough to leave their homes and friends and jobs and follow Him wherever He went for 3 years. What did they lack then? They still did not know Him in His full significance.

The word "know" is used 141 times in John's gospel. I think Wiersbe (350) offers a helpful insight when he says there are 4 different levels of "knowing." The lowest level is simply knowing a fact. The next level is to understand the truth behind the fact. However, you can know the fact, and the truth behind it, and still be lost in your sins. The third level introduces RELATIONSHIP; "to know means to believe in a

person and become related to him/her." The word "know" is used that way in Gen 4:1 to speak of the intimate relationship between Adam and Eve. It's this kind of knowledge that's necessary for eternal life (Jn 17:3 "And this is life eternal, that they may know Thee..."). The fourth use of "know" means to have a deeper relationship with a person.

Plug that into v 7. "If ye had known Me..." How do you become a Christian? By getting to know Jesus Christ. And if you know Christ, you actually know the Father. They are One.

Please notice an important distinction. True Christians are not those who merely follow Jesus' teaching and try to copy His life. True Christians are those who know Jesus.

Q: How do you get to know Jesus?

Here's where Jesus' absolute call enters the picture. We'll explore the vv 8-12 in greater detail next week, but for now I want you to see an important imperative. Jesus commands us. He calls us to do something. He repeats the word 4 times. What?

v 11 "Believe Me" v 11 "Believe Me"

v 12 "He that believeth on Me"

Faith is only as good as its object. If faith is to be valid, it must have the right object. The right object is none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't say, "Believe ABOUT Me." He said, "Believe Me." Faith is a person to person matter. We begin the Christian life by faith. We live the Christian life by faith.

Illust: A poll of 100 teachers and students of Rutgers University was asked the question, "Which dozen persons have influenced most the history of the world?" All 100 votes gave first place to Jesus Christ.

That's great. But listen. Jesus didn't call people to say He was an influential person. He called people to believe in Him, to admit their need for Him, to trust Him, to place their faith in Him.

Problem: Many people are settling for a substitute Christianity. They substitute other things in the place of Christ in their lives. Some people substitute the Church in place of the Person of Christ. But church attendance doesn't make you a spiritual person. Some people substitute religious experience in the place of the Person of Christ. Some people substitute Christian service. Some people substitute a list of rules in the place of Christ.

Friend, listen to those words again, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Put those words in the mouth of anyone else, and we'd say the person was insane. Yet do you know why Jesus could make such an absolute claim and absolute call? He is none other than God Himself.

Conclusion:

We live in a gray age of relativism. Yet this morning, we've seen 2 absolutes related to Jesus Christ. Jesus extended an absolute Claim. And Jesus extended an absolute call.

Q: How have you responded to His call?

Our society is in desperate need for a return to absolutes. We need to return to and accept absolute truth. Not because a Gallup poll says so, not because the majority vote determined it was the way to go, but for this one reason.

God has spoken. And just as He called to His disciples, He calls to us, "Believe Me."