

He Lives!

To Be the One Way to Heaven

A Sermon on John 14:1-12

Year A - Easter 5

14 - May - 2017

JJ¹

It's the cliché climax of many a movie. The hero comes to the conclusion that the only way to save the damsel in distress is to sacrifice himself. The damsel begs, "NO! NO! There has to be another way!" And the hero responds, "Darling, if there was another way, I'd do it. But this is the only way you'll survive."

Sometimes the hero dies, and sometimes he miraculously survives. But if you stop and think about it, you can punch a million holes in the storyline that shows all kinds of other ways. But that wouldn't be good storytelling, well, at least for your general American audience that's more interested in special effects than an iron-clad storyline.

In a way you could say we find a similar situation in John 14, though there aren't any holes you can poke in this storyline. Today we jump back to Maundy Thursday evening in the Upper Room. Jesus has just been discussing some very disturbing topics. He's already spoken on several occasions about suffering, dying and rising again, but this time he adds even more. One of his own disciples, Judas, is going to betray him! One of his own disciples, Peter, is going to deny all association with Jesus three times. All of the disciples are going to abandon him.

What's more, all of these things were going to happen before the night is over!

Jesus is preparing his disciples for what's about to happen, but he sees and knows how heavy all this is weighing on their hearts, so he gives them a glimpse into the beauty of God's plan. "Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am. You know where I am going, and you know the way."

These words Jesus speaks are beautiful words of comfort. Think of these words as Jesus' proposal to marry us, his Bride, the Church. He's down on one knee, promising us everything right before he went to the cross to secure it all for us.

Jesus has just laid bare his heart and beautiful plan to his disciples, and the disciples respond with what looks like a proposal gone wrong. "Wait! What are you doing? Get up! Why are you saying this? No, this isn't what I want!"

Thomas asks, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

know the way?" Philip says, "Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough for us." The disciples' faith is clouded with doubt and false hopes.

Thomas cannot conceive of a Messianic kingdom that involves his Savior losing his life and then leaving this world. Like us, they didn't want the cross, but glory. Like us, they didn't want to see God suffering, but reigning in splendor and victory.

Jesus tells Thomas that the way to heaven and his Father's house is sitting right there in front of them: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me. If you know me, you would also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

But this still wasn't enough, at least not for Philip. "Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough for us." Philip is basically saying, "Jesus, we don't want you to suffer and die! We don't want those terrible things to happen that you say were going to do! And you know, Jesus, what we've heard from you and seen you do has been great, but that isn't enough. If we can get a glimpse of the Father's glory, something like what Moses and the Elders saw on Mt. Sinai, well, that would do it. That *would* be enough."



Friends, can you see the same confused audacity in your hearts? Maybe you haven't demanded that the heavens be split open so you could take a peek, but we can catch ourselves having the same attitude and desires, often on a daily basis.

You can find it in every "If only..." you've ever pondered or uttered. It ranges from the small and insignificant to the great and life-altering. A small one

might be, "If only I had a little extra money, I could get that gadget or do-dad." A large one might be, "If only God would take this pain away..."

You could even put it the way Philip does:

"Lord, it would be enough...if you could just show a bit more of your glory and power by taking away this terrible illness from my loved one."

"Lord, it would be enough...if you could just

bring peace back into our family."

"Lord, it would be enough...if you could just make my spouse meet my desires."

"Lord, it would be enough...if you could just take this temptation out of my life."

"Lord, it would be enough...if..."

The examples are endless. If my heart, if your heart will not be content with the glory of the Father's grace we've already seen and

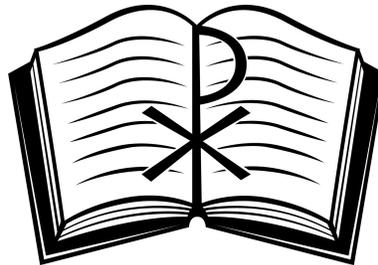
known in Jesus, then nothing will ever be enough.²

Now please understand that I'm not saying it's wrong to pray for things like healing or relief from suffering. God wants us to come to him with all our worries, concerns and troubles. But please be aware of how quickly our prayers of faith can degrade into Philip's audacious demand when we believe the devil's lie which says: *"Unless I see God's glory in this particular way, I cannot rest secure in the Father's grace to me."* Then, friends, we're saying that *everything we've already seen and known in his Son is... well...just not enough.*

If that's not enough, then nothing will ever be enough! Our hearts will simply day by day create ever new demands God must meet to be enough...until the next demand arises. Then our hearts will continue to be drawn away from the Father's greatest glory already shown to us in his Son. Then we'll just keep setting a self-chosen standard for God to prove his faithfulness to us, forgetting that God has already proven his faithfulness to us by giving and sacrificing his Son for us.

And that is exactly why Jesus spoke these words to his disciples so long ago, and speaks them to you yet today. Our hearts are so troubled and distressed by this world and our lives in it. We're so trou-

bled that we cry out with tears in our eyes, "If only! If only! If only!" Then Jesus comes to us again and again, down on one knee: "Look at me! Look into my eyes! I AM the Way and the Truth and the Life! Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am. You know where I am going, and you know the way."



When we cry out like the damsel in distress, "No! There has to be another way! Why should you suffer and die? Why should we have to struggle in this life, even suffer and die? Why can't there be glory now?" That's when Jesus

takes our hand and says, "My Bride, if there was another way, I would do it, but there truly isn't. This is the eternal plan my Father and your Father put into place before we even created the world. My Bride, I gave my life for you and took it up again all so that we can be together forever in heaven. I went to the cross to prepare our eternal home together. I did all this so that you will be ready for the glory of heaven to burst forth on the Last Day. My Bride, **I Live to be the One Way to Heaven.** I am enough for you. You will

² Italicized portions are verbatim from Prof. Richard Gurgel's (WLS) May 2017 *Grow In Grace Notes*.

see me soon, because you know the way.”
Amen.

SDG³

³ SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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