

life itself. Jesus is asserting in strong terms the uniqueness and the sufficiency of His work for men. We should not overlook the faith involved both in the utterance and in the acceptance of those words, spoken as they were on the eve of the crucifixion. 'I am the Way,' said One who would shortly hang impotent on a cross. 'I am the Truth', when the lies of evil men were about to enjoy a spectacular triumph. 'I am the Life', when within a few hours His corpse would be placed in a tomb."

How do we know God? Through Jesus! He lives in the Father. The Father lives in him. The Father does his work through Jesus. That relationship is unique, but our faith in Jesus will open up new possibilities for us too (vv. 12-14).

Applying it all to ourselves

Today's world has many gurus. Many want us to see religious truth as relative. But Jesus makes absolute claims and offers certainty for the present life and beyond.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

- In what ways have these words had special significance for us?
- In what ways have we come to know God through Jesus?

For the people of our day...

We live in a secular society. The "God-questions" don't necessarily occur to people at all. Do they want to know about God? Are they concerned about the truth? Don't they already have the life?

- How would Australians respond to the idea of Jesus as "the Way, the Truth and the Life"?
- What associated ideas are there in the Australian culture that would help to communicate this teaching about Jesus?

Study 6: "The True Vine" Reading: John 15.1-17

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What's the difference between death and life? I have heard it said that with some people it is hard to tell!

Sometimes we have heard someone's description of a conversation at a party – "... and this fellow was there who was really alive! Always full of smart comments and clever stories – maybe not your kind of stories! But he was brilliant! So alive!"

We need to be asking why a non-Christian with lewd stories and dubious morals should be the life of the party!

What was Jesus like? He certainly had a sense of humour. Listen to what he said to the Jewish leaders, "You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Matt. 23.24, NIV). A serious comment, but not absolutely straight-faced when you think about it!

Perhaps too many Christians are like "death warmed. up rather than those who have experienced "the resurrection and the life"

- How would Australians respond to the idea of Jesus as "the Resurrection and the Life"?
- What associated ideas are there in the Australian culture that would help to communicate this teaching about Jesus?

Sounds like we need to learn about Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life!

The Situation in Jesus' Time

Following the raising of Lazarus the opposition to Jesus grew to the point of a definite plot to get rid of him. It was in this context that Caiaphas made his "prophetic" statement that "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (11.50). We read in v. 53, "So from that day on they plotted to take his life."

We see Jesus withdrawing into a quiet region (v.54). Six days before Passover he arrives at Mary and Martha's house to a dinner in his honour, at which Mary anoints his feet with expensive perfume (12.1-8).

The numbers of people following Jesus are a concern to his enemies, so much so that "the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on

account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him” (vv.10-11).

The account moves on to the Palm Sunday crowd, the nucleus of which was the group who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus (v.17). The Pharisees are getting very worried, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!” (v.19).

From chapter 13 we move into the Upper Room. We are not given an account of the Last Supper itself in John, but through to chapter 17 we have the teaching of Jesus during this important time – he is preparing himself and preparing them for the events soon to happen and for the continuing work which will need to follow the withdrawal of his physical presence from them. For, in a very real sense, the next and last public ministry of Jesus during the days of his flesh will in fact be his death on the cross. He still has many things to teach them after his resurrection, but the ministry will be theirs!

At the end of chapter 13, Jesus has spoken of betrayal and denial – right in their ranks! It must look to them as if it is all about to come apart at the seams!

- Try to imagine the feelings of the disciples as Jesus talks to them about betrayal and denial – right in their ranks!

Bible Reading: John 14.1-14.

Jesus addresses them at the point of these feelings. Leon Morris comments, “If the present imperative is significant its meaning will be ‘stop being troubled’. Jesus is not urging trouble-free men not to start worrying. He is talking to men whose hearts are far from tranquil... These words are to be taken in close connection with the preceding. Peter has been thrown into consternation at the prediction of the threefold denial, and we cannot doubt that this had its effect on the others also... Moreover Jesus had spoken of His impending departure, a departure to a place where they could not follow. To men who have left everything for their Leader to be told that He is about to leave them is shattering. They are all very disturbed. And Jesus knows that within a few short hours they will be even more disturbed. So he tells them to be calm.”

The cure for their troubled hearts is “faith” or “trust” – trust in the Father and his loving will, trust in the Son and his redemptive work. We notice some differences in translations here. In fact, the verb “believe/trust” can be either imperative or indicative in each case. Having stated the various possibilities, Leon Morris judges it best “to take both forms as imperative. Jesus is urging His followers to continue to believe in the Father and to

continue to believe also in Him, and in this way not to let their hearts be troubled.”

The ultimate goal of our life is not in this life, but in the next. We view death as the “grim reaper”. Jesus views it as the passage into “the Father’s house” with its many rooms. The very reason he has to leave them is so that he can prepare a place for them there. Then, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The way to heaven for us is made possible by the “going” of Jesus - i.e. his death for our sins. This the disciples cannot grasp. Lazarus had gone – into a tomb – and then been raised to life again. Somehow the going of Jesus is more than that, more than a grave. And the way must somehow be more than his dying. If his dying is his way to somewhere, how can that be our way to anywhere?

Jesus answers that question, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (14.6).

- What does Jesus mean when he calls himself “the Way, the Truth and the Life”?
- Jesus seems to be making a very exclusive claim about the way to the Father. Why does he do this?
- Jesus said these things “in private”. To what extent do they represent the core of his enemies objections to him?

Leon Morris comments. “But Jesus is to go to the Father (13.3; 16.5,10,17) and He now speaks of the way to God (cf Ps.27. 11) as the end of the verse shows. Jesus is Himself the way (notice how ‘way’ receives emphasis through repetition, vv.4,5,6). He not only shows men the way (i.e. by revealing it) but He is the way (i.e. he redeems men). ‘The truth’ in this connection will have saving significance. It will point to Jesus’ utter dependability, but also to the saving truth of the gospel. ‘The life’ will likewise take its content from the gospel. Jesus is both life, and the source of life to men. All this is followed by the explicit statement that no man comes to the Father other than through Christ. ‘Way,’ ‘truth,’ and ‘life’ all have relevance, the triple expression emphasising the many-sidedness of the saving work. ‘Way’ speaks of a connection between two, the link between God and man. ‘Truth’ reminds us of the complete reliability of Jesus in all that He does and is. And ‘life’ stresses the fact that mere physical existence matters little. The only life worthy of the name is that which Jesus brings, for He is