

3 May 2026 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

## I Am the Way

John 14.1-14

Today I would like to focus on our Gospel reading. It is a beautiful passage, but sadly it is often seen as being about judgement and exclusion instead of encouragement and inclusion.

Later in the service, after we confess our sins and make our peace with God, we will declare ourselves to be the body of Christ, at peace with one another as Jesus asked us to be. He told us. "Love one another as I have loved you." The First Order Holy Communion invites us to the Lord's table with the words, "You who are in love and charity with your neighbours."

Paul expressed this as being many parts of the one body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:27 says, 'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.'

Here in our Gospel reading from John, Jesus is with his disciples, Chapter 14 verse 1 is commonly translated, as in our reading today, as "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." This sounds as though Jesus is speaking to the whole group of people. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." And we know he was with the disciples, so that also inclines us to this view.

This verse is also frequently translated as "Do not let your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." This sounds as though Jesus is speaking to one person. "Do not let your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." Why the difference? Both of those translations are common and used in a range of Bibles. So, to whom is Jesus talking? Is it one person or a group of people?

I want to take you to the 1611 King James Bible (Authorized Version). It was the result of seven years of work by 47 scholars. It was not the first Bible in English, but it has been the longest used and probably the most influential. These days, it is not the most accurate Bible. Over the centuries after its publication, other early scriptures in the original languages were discovered that were not known when the King James Bible was written. However, it does do some things very well, and one of those is the distinction between one person, *you*, and a group of people, *ye*.

So, what does the first verse of today's Gospel reading say in this Bible? "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." What do you notice? [ ... ]

Your heart. One heart. Ye believe. More than one person.

We can go back to the original Greek. My Biblical Greek is not great, so for this I rely on **Angela N. Parker**, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Greek at the McAfee School of Theology - Mercer University, Atlanta, Georgia.

She tells us that in this passage, Jesus is addressing more than one person. He is talking to his disciples, but speaking of one heart. The Greek word for "your" is plural but the word for "heart" is singular. The disciples are many, but their heart is one. As Paul says, we (all of us together) are the body of Christ. We are of one heart in Christ.

So, how does that work? We are called to a common intention, a common commitment, a common faith that calls us to follow Christ. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of his disciples believing in him, going with him, being where he is and where he will be. Specifically, to be with the Father, and they will know what that is like by knowing what Jesus is like.

They ask Jesus a literal question. Thomas says to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus turns the discussion away from geography to identity, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Jesus is the way. The Greek word for way is *hodos*. In a way similar to the English word "way", *hodos* can mean a path or road, a journey or a trip, or a way of life, of being or doing.

You might recall the hymn words, "Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Thou art the potter, I am the clay."

Early Christians called themselves followers of the way. They did not mean a particular road or a particular physical journey, but a way of being and living, specifically Jesus' way.

Let's move to Jesus being the truth. The Greek word for truth can mean something that is not a lie or an untruth or a half-truth. However, it can also mean the coming of a hope or a dream. This is similar in English. If my dream

comes true, or my hope is realised, it becomes something that exists, not a fiction or still just a hope. It exists as a reality. It can be known and experienced. To walk in the way is to experience the truth of that way. Everything that Jesus did and taught testified to the truth of the Father. To know Jesus was to know the Father. Truly. If we talk of the Father in terms that are not consistent with the words of Jesus, we may well be drifting into our own ideas instead of the truth that is found in Jesus.

And what about life? Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. We often speak of him as bringing light and life. This is resurrection life, not just for the future but for right now. Fullness of life, abundant life, a way of being and living that is life-giving for us and for others. We are not Jesus himself, and we can sometimes struggle with the dilemmas of the Christian life, but it is fair to ask ourselves, "Is this the way of Jesus? Does this reflect the truth of all we know about God? Is this life-giving for us and for others?"

If the answer is always yes, then we can be reasonably confident that, however imperfectly, we are being Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, people of the Way, seekers of divine truth and light.

Let's go back to the start of our Gospel reading. Do not let your heart (the one heart you all have in Christ) be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Christ. There is a place prepared just for you, and you know the way.

Lord Jesus Christ, take us in hand. Make us yours. Take the clay of our lives and mould it in your way. You are the way, the truth and the life. Help us walk in your way now and evermore. Amen.

Helen Dean

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