We are continuing to look at the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry and today’s passage brings us to Jesus definitive teaching that He is the only route to God the Father.

We read last week that Jesus said that His hour had come – it was the time for Him to fulfil and complete the first stage of His work as Messiah – and this account brings us within hours of the Passover, when Jesus will take the place of the lambs being offered as a memorial sacrifice before God, for the forgiveness of sins.

**PRAY**

Being a follower of Jesus has caused many people many problems since the very first days of the early church.

It has brought people to martyrdom, even before the church was really established – think of Stephen in **Acts 6-7** and the other unnamed people who were pursued and arrested by Paul, for nothing more than putting their trust in Jesus as their Saviour.

This world claims to be a tolerant place, where to a degree you can do or believe anything, without interference.

But being a follower of Jesus can still cause people to be persecuted –

* because they say there is no other God than the God in Heaven, whose Son Jesus died on a cross 2,000 years ago.
* because they say the object of their worship will be God and Jesus alone, nothing else - whether it be man-made, or a person himself.

There are many passages of Scripture upon which we can build our faith to endure trials and persecutions and John’s account here of a conversation between Jesus and His disciples should strengthen our faith and resolve to continue in the Lord.

**SLIDE** **John 14:1-6**

**“Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I Am, there you may be also. Where I go you know and the way you know.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I Am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**

Thomas is often criticised – he is accused of doubting elsewhere – but here he should be remembered and praised for his honesty.

He is confused – expressing a belief that Jesus was going away, in the same way He would leave to go to a neighbouring village – but not telling His disciples which village He was going to.

Let’s not be too critical of Thomas or the other disciples – they were still learning and Jesus was teaching them new things each day.

Spurgeon said of this passage, ‘the disciples speak to Jesus with familiarity and He talks to them in full sympathy with their weakness, teaching them little by little as they are able to learn. Often, they show their ignorance, but never do they seem timid in his presence, or ashamed to let him see how shallow and hard of understanding they are.’

We have the benefit of knowing the next part of the account, knowing that Jesus was speaking about returning to His Father in Heaven and how He was going to do that.

But there are other things we may be ignorant about, or don’t understand – Jesus’ example shows that we to ask when we do not understand – to seek wise counsel, or God Himself in the Scriptures for answers.

Jesus said, **I Am the way, the truth and the life** – He didn’t say He would show us a way, or teach us a way – He said He is the way.

He didn’t promise to show us the truth, or teach it to us - He said He is the truth.

Jesus didn’t offer us any secrets to life - He said He is the life.

That is a hard statement to comprehend and possibly follow, when we look at what is to come.

* Jesus’ way would be the cross.
* Jesus’ truth would be to not argue against the lies that were laid against Him.
* Jesus’ life would actually involve death – a painful, humiliating death, that would be all the more hard for Jesus, because He too upon Himself in that moment, the wrath of God, for every single sin, by every person who has ever existed.

Yet Jesus claims the only way to God the Father – to Heaven – is through Him.

Jesus has made a claim of exclusivity – it was and remains a controversial statement to claim absolute rights of being the **way**, **truth** and **life** – of being the only way to God.

This statement contradicts modern day thinking that all religions lead to God – unless you have faith in Jesus as your Saviour and have that to the total exclusion of anything else, your route to God will fail.

Modern day thinking would tolerate Jesus saying that He was one way to God, but that is not Scriptural, nor is it what the Bible has laid out for us.

As early in the Bible as the Ten Commandments, God is laying out that He is the only One – **I Am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before (besides) me** **Exodus 20:2-3**.

Consistently, throughout the OT, God denounced and mocked the supposed gods others worshipped **Isaiah 41:21-29, 1 Kings 18:19-40**.

The Bible presents just one true God and Jesus (the promised Messiah) is consistently presented as the only way to the only true God.

‘The Christian faith will receive anyone who comes through Jesus. Jesus said, **through Me**: “It is not ‘through some special kind of faith,’ but ‘through me’.’ (Dods)

**SLIDE John 14:7-8**

**“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”**

Jesus is telling us here to get to know Him. All mankind is mad in the image of God (**Genesis 1:26**), so by knowing the perfect human, we can know the perfect God. Jesus says, to know Him is to know God.

The disciples will soon see and understand that true loving nature of God – in Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection.

Yet, Jesus has to say **Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known Me**.

Even the likes of Philip who has been close to Jesus for over three years, did not understand Him. The same is possible and true for many today.

Have you come to the point where you know Jesus? This isn’t knowing about Him – it is knowing Him as you would a friend, knowing their personality, their likes and dislikes, intimate things that only good friends would share.

That is the relationship that Jesus wants to have with each one of us, but it is dependent on us. Jesus is waiting for you to approach Him, to ask Him to take over your life.

By allowing Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to take over your life, you allow God to take it over – you arrive at a point where you surrender your life to God, to be the perfect person that you were born to be.

But we only live that way by putting trust in God, something that Jesus was very clearly doing. He said, **The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority**. Jesus life and all every word He spoke was in harmony with and had total dependence upon God the Father.

Everything Jesus did was under God’s guidance and authority. That should be our outlook – only the things tasked by God should occupy your life.

**SLIDE John 14:12-14**

**“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the things that I do he will do also; and greater things than these he will do, because I go to My Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”**

Jesus spends some of His last hours with His disciples, giving them assurances – things to give them and us, faith for the future.

There was an assurance that Jesus’ death was not to be the end, it was just the start of another chapter – when God’s work would be handed to His disciples to continue.

There is a clear expectation here that Jesus expected and expects, those who believe in Him to carry on His work. He didn’t expect the disciples to disband after His departure, but to carry on His work in even greater magnitude (**greater works than these he will do**).

He didn’t expect the work of God to stop after those first disciples had died – He expected and expects, each new generation to do His work to advance the heavenly Kingdom on earth.

The **greater works** that Jesus describes are in terms of volume, not in terms of magnitude. He left behind a group of followers who would spread His kingdom to more people and places than Jesus ever did in His life and ministry.

If you doubt this, consider that **Acts 1:15** tells us there were about 120 believers shortly after Jesus returned to heaven, but within a few days of that event, after Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 individuals trusted in Jesus to be their Messiah – their Saviour **Acts 2:41**.

This wasn’t a numbers competition, nor has the Lord’s work ever been that. Peter’s numerical blessing was because Jesus had laid a firm foundation in his life, upon which God could build.

Whatever stage you are in your Christian life, Jesus should always be that foundation on which we depend and also can build. God can use you in all situations, as long as you remain close to Him, on that foundation block.

It is in the empowerment given by the Holy Spirit that we grow, both in relationship with God and in confidence to be able to do His work.

This passage concludes by Jesus saying **Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do**.

There is not a magic set of words that need to be said before or after a prayer to get your prayer answered, Jesus is saying the Lord’s work will be done through His prayerful people, who asked and acted in His **name**.

He promised to do **anything** that His followers asked for in His **name**; according to His character and authority.

That is important. We should not use prayer as a dumping ground for frustrations, or a shopping list for our desires.

As one commentator said, ‘The test of any prayer is: Can I make it in the name of Jesus? No man, for instance, could pray for personal revenge, for personal ambition, for some unworthy and unchristian object in the name of Jesus.’ (Barclay)

Whatever we ask for, requires us to ‘ask ‘in His name’ and to only do things that have a unity of mind, a unity of aim and a unity of motive with God.’ (Trench)

God wants us to be both praying and working with our feet firmly planted on the foundation of faith that Jesus gives – and if we do that, we will find our faith is strengthened and our prayers are more frequently answered, because we are praying for the things that God wants us to pray for.

But Jesus ends that statement with a warning – all of those blessings that God gives you to do those greater things, they are actually so **the Father may be glorified in the Son**.

Do not take pride that you are able to do these things, instead praise God that you are enabling the Father to be glorified.

**CONCLUSION**

Scripture is very clear that there is only one God and the only way we can approach Him is through Jesus.

Scripture also gives a clear warning about failing to take that approach.

**Matthew 25** shows there will be a division between believers and non-believers one day – that division will be based on what we/you have done for Jesus.

To start that process of working for Him, we need to accept and act on Jesus’ statement **I Am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

**OFFER / PRAY**

**READINGS**

**John 14:1-14**

**“Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I Am, there you may be also. Where I go you know and the way you know.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I Am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**

**“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”**

**“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the things that I do he will do also; and greater things than these he will do, because I go to My Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”**

**Matthew 25:31-36,**

**31‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with Him, He will sit on his glorious throne. 32All the nations will be gathered before Him and will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.**

**34‘Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”**

**37‘Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?”**

**40‘The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”**

**41‘Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.**

**42For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me.”**

**44‘They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or ill or in prison, and did not help you?”**

**45‘He will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”**

**46‘Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.’**