

Sermon John 14 1 14 5th S of Easter

Sermon: 5th Sunday of Easter

Text: John 14:1-14 (v. 5)

Theme: Do you know where you are going?

Goal: To reaffirm that there is no other way to God but Jesus.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: I have shared with some of you that our children gave us a GPS when we moved to Cape Town. It gives us the direction to go to your homes and to other places we want to go to. Without it I wouldn't find the right ways in Cape Town. But our daughter-in-law said, when they gave us the GPS: "A GPS is not God! It makes mistakes as well..." And it really happened to us twice: I set the address on it, but I didn't indicate the right suburb. And it directed me to the road and number I had planned for, but in another suburb. There are so many roads with the same name.... and I became confused and lost...

I – Is any way a good way?

It is common to say: "*All roads lead to Rome*", as to say that all religions are good and lead to heaven. Do you think so?

Once I read a good story about this: An anthropologist wanted to do a research on an isolated tribe living far in the forest. He came to the closest village to that forest and was looking for a good guide to take him there. One guide was introduced to him as a very good guide, that knew the forest well. The anthropologist asked him: Do you know the tribe? He answered: I know the forest, but not the tribe... - A second guide came and offered to take the man there. He asked him the same question. He answered: I have once heard the drums from that tribe, but I have never been there... A third guide was introduced to the man. The same question was asked him. He answered: I not only know the tribe very well, but I'm also the son of the chief! And he led the

anthropologist to the village and to his father, the chief.

Would you go to such a place, or to any other place, without a good guide or without a good map? If you want to reach your goal, you need to have good directions. But, as someone said, *“if you don't know where to go any way may be a good way.”*

In spite of the three years that the disciples had spent with Jesus, Thomas was not sure about his future and where to go. (St. Thomas again!!!) And he asked: “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Thanks God that Thomas was honest with his doubts and asked Jesus this question . He received an answer that gives directions to people for centuries!

Do you know where you are heading? What is waiting for you at the end of the road? When you look forward, is it dark or is there any light? Are you walking in your daily paths in confidence or in doubts?

It was not easy for the disciples to look to the future when Jesus spoke these words to them. It was Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus had told them about Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial, and about His own suffering and death. And now He comforts them, saying: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.” And He lifted their eyes up to the hope of eternal life and to heaven: The house of His Father, where He was to go to prepare room for them (and for us as well). His death on the cross opened the gate of heaven to all who believe in Him. And when he went back to heaven after His resurrection, sitting now at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, He is preparing room for us, interceding for us and blessing His Word and the Sacrament in our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit.

For the sake of His name, Jesus assures us that He is waiting for us at the end of our lives and that He Himself will come back to take us to His Father's house. *“Because of the dangers on the way, Jesus assures His disciples that they do not need to worry about this, as He will come*

again and will Himself escort them to their destination” (ABC p. 1283). - Luther wrote: “This is assuredly the best and the most comforting sermon which Christ, our Lord, gave on earth. We should praise St. John because he bequeathed it to Christendom. It is a source of comfort, a treasure, which we cannot purchase with all the wealth of the world.” (Theo Mueller, A, p. 76).

II – Christianity is exclusive!

Do “all roads lead to Rome”? Certainly NOT! Jesus is very clear when He answers Thomas’ question. He says: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” There is no other way; there are no several alternatives or other options. Jesus, and only Jesus. And not any Jesus, as many are presenting the healing Jesus, the prosperous Jesus, the loving Jesus who accepts wrong behaviors, and so on. The Jesus we must believe is the one who is *“one with the Father”* and who *“was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead”*, as we confess in the Apostle’s Creed.

Christianity is exclusive. In spite of the post-modern way-of-life, that says that nothing more is true by itself, but everything is relative; in spite of that so many Christian churches are becoming flexible in their teachings, the truth remains: “No one comes to the Father except through me”, says Jesus. Jesus is not one way among many, but He is THE WAY! Peter preached in Acts 4:12: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” And to believe in Jesus is to accept and to follow everything He said and did, and not only some parts of the Scripture.

Conclusion: Luther said: *“Don't worry about where the heaven is, or*

where the hell is; or: how it is in heaven and how it is in hell. But be worried about how to reach the heaven and how to spare yourself from hell. And in that matter the Bible is very clear.” “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,” says Jesus. Walking on the way, - walking together with Jesus, - we are sure that we are on the right path, which leads us to the Father's house.

When Stephen confessed his faith in Jesus, and was stoned because of his hope, “full of the Spirit, he looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” His last words were: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit... and he cried out: Lord, do not hold this sin against them”, this is, against those who were stoning him to death. One of them was the young Saul. God heard the prayer of Stephen and called the young Saul to be the great Apostle Paul, forgiving him his sins and equipping him to be the greatest missionary in the history of the Christian Church.

Stephen knew where he was going at the end of his life. Jesus was always in front of his eyes during his life and so also Jesus was in front of his eyes when he passed away. Jesus, only Jesus, the way and the truth and the life. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle
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