

I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life

DAVE BAST

Here is the scenario: You are about to leave and never see again the people you love most dearly of all in the world. What do you say to them? Let's listen to what Jesus says in the Gospel of John. Stay tuned.

MEG JENISTA

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is Groundwork, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Meg Jenista.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast. Welcome once again to Meg Jenista, who has been with us before and joins us again for this program. We are doing a number of the "I am" sayings of Jesus from the Gospel of John. There are seven of them; we are drawing near to the close of this series, and today we have John 14:6, which is one of the most famous; but before we reveal what that is, I think we should perhaps set the stage for it a little bit.

MEG JENISTA

Absolutely. In John 14, the first four verses may sound familiar to you. I know I use them frequently in funerals, as you do as well, and many people have taken a great deal of comfort from these words:

¹Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. ²My Father's house has plenty of room. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me, that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place I am going.

DAVE BAST

Yes, that is a great passage; and I cannot help but hear it in the King James Version, which I grew up with: In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. But, you know, they have a sort of stained glass quality, don't they? They are familiar, as you pointed out, often in funeral contexts, certainly churchy, and I think that can obscure the dynamics of what is going on here, because this was spoken in the Upper Room on the last night of Jesus' life, and it is part of what we call the farewell discourse in John's Gospel. There are four whole chapters where, as we alluded in the opening, this is Jesus' last evening – it is His last shot to tell everything that He wants the disciples to know.

MEG JENISTA

The picture I have of that is the opportunities I had to babysit growing up, and the first time a young couple leaves their infant child with a babysitter, and the urgency they have to remind you of the correct temperature of the bottles and the favorite blanket and the correct bedtime and...

DAVE BAST

Exactly, yes.

MEG JENISTA

And every single detail.

DAVE BAST

We are grandparents and we did a weekend recently with our grandkids, and my daughter-in-law, who is a beautiful, wonderful mother – very organized – she left us sheets of things to do, and all the details; and you get the sense, this is what Jesus is doing with the disciples because He begins, in effect, by saying – kind of dropping this bomb on them: Hey, I am leaving...

MEG JENISTA

Right.

DAVE BAST

Which... What, You're leaving?! Wait a minute, You're leaving us for good? You know, You talk about the Father's house and many mansions, and all that stuff, that kind of sounds like You are going away permanently. And in fact, in a sense, He is. He is leaving them.

MEG JENISTA

And the work that they thought they were investing in had not come to fruition yet; and they invested heavily. They invested their lives, they quit their jobs, left their families, followed Jesus; and they expected some immediate – some perhaps political – kingdom revolution; and that had not happened yet.

DAVE BAST

Yes; you know, this is so interesting how dense the disciples were when you read the Gospels.

MEG JENISTA

It is kind of a relief, isn't it, when we are dense disciples?

DAVE BAST

Yes, I guess there is some comfort in that, but He has been trying over and over and over to prepare them for this event – for His death, and His resurrection. He clearly predicted it over and over. They kept thinking Messiah means power, conqueror, chase the Romans away, set up Your kingdom, we are going to get little thrones next to You. Can we be on Your right and Your left, a couple of them asked? And He keeps saying: No, Messiah means suffering, serving, sacrifice, first the cross before the crown. Here they get right up to the end and they still do not get it.

MEG JENISTA

And the level of anxiety in the room at that point must have been immense; I cannot imagine. There are a few questions recorded in the text, but there must have been plenty of other questions running just underneath the surface. What do You mean? Why are You leaving? What do we need to do? How are we going to manage without You?

DAVE BAST

Right; and His response to all that is: Hey, trust Me. You trust in God, trust in Me, too; and you know the way where I am going, He says.

MEG JENISTA

To which Thomas blessedly responds: No, we don't. What do You mean? We don't know. The real text says: ⁵Lord, we do not know where You are going, so how will we know the way?

DAVE BAST

Yes, but I think you are right in reading behind that, a kind of outrage almost. What are You doing to us? We have left everything to follow You. We are finally entering Jerusalem at the height of Passover. We think this is probably the moment. You have just had this triumphal entry a few days ago when the crowd is acclaiming You as the king; and now is the moment to strike, and You say: No, I am going to, I guess, depart the earth, if

we are understanding You correctly.

MEG JENISTA

Thomas must have felt: Are You going to go hide someplace? Are You going to disappear and we have to figure out where You are going and how to get there? How are we going to do that? You show us...

DAVE BAST

Is this literal? Right; have You got some kind of hiding place?

MEG JENISTA

And we have followed You every step of the way. How are we going to figure out where You are if You are not here with us to show us the way?

DAVE BAST

And then comes Jesus' majestic reply in John 14:6: Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. ⁷If you really know Me, you will know My Father as well; from now on, you do know Him and have seen Him. There is a lot there to talk about.

MEG JENISTA

There is a lot to unpack. Stay tuned as we dive into that next.
Segment 2

DAVE BAST

You are listening to Groundwork; I am Dave Bast.

MEG JENISTA

And I am Meg Jenista. Today we are discussing Jesus' promise in John 14, where He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

DAVE BAST

Yes, and it is also... what should we call it, a demand or a challenge, because He adds, "No one comes to the Father except through Me," which is perhaps the most controversial thing about our faith today; you know, in an age of pluralism, an age of relativism, no one can go to God except through Jesus? Really? That is what you say?

MEG JENISTA

Right; the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ are the stumbling block for many people; not just people who are not Christians, but people who are Christians and know and love good people of other faith traditions.

DAVE BAST

Yes; so maybe we will reserve that one and not necessarily focus on it. We did talk about this quite a bit in an earlier program when we talked about Jesus' statement: I am the door, or I am the gate. Really, this way, truth and life saying echoes a number of the earlier pronouncements. It is tempting to say this is the climactic one, or this is the most outrageous one...

MEG JENISTA

I think they are all the climactic ones, Dave.

DAVE BAST

but, they all... yes, but you think about, "I am the door, I am the gate," or the Sermon on the Mount, and strive to enter through the narrow door – the narrow way that leads to life – so that whole exclusiveness of Jesus – there are not many paths to God, not many roads up the mountain, but there are only two: A narrow

way that leads to life, and a broad way that leads to destruction. So, rather than focus on that, let's look at the broader context of "way, truth, and life," and how that interacts a little bit; and again, some echoes of some of the other "I am" sayings here.

MEG JENISTA

Right; so, you mentioned that it is an echo of the idea that Jesus is the door, but when we say Jesus is the truth, we also echo the idea that Jesus is the light of the world, that Jesus is what casts light and gives us the ability to see and to understand and to know truth.

DAVE BAST

Yes; the true light that enlightens everyone was coming into the world, John says in his very first chapter in the prologue; so this is really a claim that all truth is found in Jesus. Again, it is a bit controversial. Are we saying there is no truth except in Jesus? There is nothing outside of Him? Not quite, I don't think, but we are saying that somehow whatever is true is going to connect us back to Jesus.

MEG JENISTA

Right; that is the *doctrine* we would say in the Church, the doctrine of common grace; the idea that all truth is God's truth and that somehow we will know something is true if it leads us closer to the heart of the Gospel.

DAVE BAST

Yes, and again, this is something that people struggle with today because we tend to talk today about values. We are less comfortable talking about truth, right? You are making truth claims. Jesus is making the ultimate truth claim; He says that it is *Him* – it is Himself; but today we tend to speak more about values: Well, this is true for me; this is one of my values. It is very interesting to think about that because the thing is, if it is just a value – if it is just something you decide is true for you, then you are standing in judgment over that; but if something is absolutely true, then that stands in judgment over you. Do you know what I am trying to say?

MEG JENISTA

Right, I agree; and I think it is important to note that Jesus does not say: Here is the truth, and follow it with a creed, although those are important; or a political stance that all people must have; or specific bullet points and outlines of factual, doctrinal truth. He is making a claim that is far different and far more intriguing, more robust than that. He is saying: I am the truth.

DAVE BAST

Yes, what does that mean, to say that a person is the truth as opposed to saying a statement is the truth? I mean, a statement is the truth – I can grasp that. It is either true or false. Does it correspond to reality? But how do we accept truth when it comes to us in a person?

MEG JENISTA

The analogy that works for me is the idea that I could grab a dossier from Homeland Security or the FBI on you, Dave, and I am sure it would be very interesting reading; and I would feel that I know a lot about you at the end of reading that document; but it is only in co-hosting a radio show or spending time with you that I actually know you as a person. It is a different kind of knowledge. It will take a long time to get to know a person, whereas it might just take a few hours to read a document.

DAVE BAST

Truth is more than information.

MEG JENISTA

Right.

DAVE BAST

Truth is relational; truth is discovered through spending time with and getting to know someone; and for us as Christians, we value scripture; but ultimately, truth is not a book.

MEG JENISTA

Right.

DAVE BAST

The reason we value scripture is because we find Christ in it. The word of God written was written not just to give us ideas to believe, or even practices to obey, but to introduce us to the word of God made flesh – Jesus Christ. So, the truth ultimately comes down to knowing Christ and being known by Him, and in that relationship with Him we come to know the life as well. He is life – all the promises of life – He is the way. He is the end, but He is also the way through which we travel to the end – to the Father’s house, incidentally, in which there are many rooms.

MEG JENISTA

Think of the comfort that this must have been to the disciples, who in this moment were very anxious because they needed to get it right. They thought they needed to know every single bullet point, every single fact, every single direction along the way.

DAVE BAST

Yes; they wanted that list typed out in great detail: Do this, do this, do this, do this.

MEG JENISTA

But it is actually a comfort for Jesus to say: This is going to come about in relationship to Me. That even though I will be gone in the physical sense, the relationship with Me will still be accessible to you; and every step of the way I will show you the next step, because we are going to be in communication – we are going to be continuing to learn and love each other.

DAVE BAST

You know, we often have focused on verse 6: I am the way, the truth and the life; but there is a verse 7. Jesus does not stop there. He goes on to say to Thomas: You know, if you know Me you will know the Father, too. In fact, from now on, He says, you do know Him and have seen Him; which is equally outrageous if you stop and listen to what He is saying. You have seen Me, you have come to know Me, that means you have seen God, and I want to say: Huh? What, what, again. Can you even do that? Isn’t God invisible? And Philip bursts in at this point, another of the disciples, and says: Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Jesus answers: Don’t you know, Philip? Even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. Let’s talk about that a little bit more, too.

Segment 3

MEG JENISTA

This is Groundwork, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Meg Jenista.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast.

MEG JENISTA

Before the break, we introduced a conversation between Philip and Jesus in which Philip says, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus’ response was, “Don’t you know Me, Philip? Even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say to Me, ‘Show us the Father?’”

DAVE BAST

Okay, Meg, so let me sum up here just these few verses from John 14. Jesus says: I am going to prepare a place for you. You believe in God, believe in Me, too, just like you believe in God. You know where I am going. I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me. And don't you understand? I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. Whoever has seen Me has seen God.

MEG JENISTA

Well, when you put it that way, no wonder they were confused.

DAVE BAST

Yes, and is there anything more He could say? Is there anything higher or greater He could claim for Himself?

MEG JENISTA

In fact, this is the claim that the religious teachers made against Jesus that ultimately led Him to trial and to execution was, this man claims to be God; and in fact, He does, right here in this passage.

DAVE BAST

And He claims to be the only way that anyone can know God. It is not just like saying, as modern gurus do today, we are all god; every one of us has a little bit of God inside us. Jesus is clearly saying: No, God is God – all that talk about the Father is clearly pointing to that. God is still this awesome, majestic, transcendent – in a way, unknowable – invisible being. You know, you cannot see God, can you? But He says: Well, yes you can if you just look at Me. Isn't God invisible? Doesn't the Bible teach that, Meg?

MEG JENISTA

The Bible also teaches that the word became flesh and made its dwelling among us; John says that in the prologue to his Gospel; and this is Jesus living out that promise: I am the word. I am God made flesh and I have dwelt among you for three years. You know Me. You are going to continue to know Me; and that is where you are going to find your strength and your ability to survive the coming days that are going to be so confusing and so overwhelming.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and that great statement in John 1:14 that you were just alluding to. John goes on to say: And we beheld His glory. The word became flesh and dwelt – or pitched His tent, literally – among us and we beheld His glory; and the idea was in the Old Testament, no, you could not see God; and in some sense, we still cannot. He dwells in unapproachable light – the whole idea of glory and brightness and light – so much so that they put a curtain up in the Temple, and the light was behind the curtain; nobody could see it; but now, John says, we beheld His glory. We have seen it because it came in the flesh in this man, Jesus. So, as Jesus says to Philip, if you have seen Me, you have seen God. Wow!

MEG JENISTA

That must have been a great comfort for them today, but it remains a question that we have as we live out our faith in Jesus Christ today, because Philip and Thomas and all of the other disciples saw Jesus; they walked alongside Him for three years; and even they were a bit confused at times. How are we going to live with Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life?

DAVE BAST

Well, another way I guess you could put it is: How do we see Jesus? They saw Him literally...

MEG JENISTA

Absolutely.

DAVE BAST

With their eyes. So, how do we get to see Him, because, let's be frank, He is not here anymore, is He, in that sense? Physically He is gone. How do we see Him?

MEG JENISTA

There are a couple of answers to that question. The first one is the tagline to this show: That we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

DAVE BAST

I think that is right, and it does not sound real dramatic or exciting. It is not some secret: Well, if you do this, this or this, or if you meditate long enough and hard enough you will have a vision and see Him, or pray; but John does say later on in the Bible, in his first letter: What we have seen and actually touched and handled about the word we have told you so that you can have fellowship with us – so that you can join us. Well, I think what he is getting at there is, it is through their testimony – through their witness – which is written down on the pages of this book that we, too, can see Him – can hear His words – can see His miracles – can see His actions – can see God in and through Him.

MEG JENISTA

Right; just as we believe now in a risen Christ – a living Christ – we believe that His word is still living and active. We believe that we can engage and interact and we find Jesus on the written pages of this book; but there is something else that Jesus has given us, and it is a few chapters later in the Gospel of John as Jesus prays for His disciples. He promises them the Holy Spirit, so that it is not a matter of us trying to figure out our own way; it is not a matter of us trying to figure out our own truth or our own lives. It is Jesus' own spirit given to us to guide us and to show us truth and to fill us with courage and power and encouragement in life.

DAVE BAST

That is a great point, Meg, and it reminds us... We talked a little bit about the *farewell discourse*, these four chapters – John 14 through 17 – where Jesus takes the final few hours in the Upper Room to tell His disciples everything that He thinks they need to know, and most of what He talks about after Chapter 14, and even later in this chapter, is the coming of the Holy Spirit. He says: I am not going to leave you like orphans. I am not going to leave you completely alone. You know, this talk about My going, well guess what? I will come back to you in a different way – in the Person of the Spirit – and I will dwell within you and with you so that you will know and you will see and you will understand eventually; and they did.

MEG JENISTA

And when we say the Apostles' Creed, if you come from a tradition that recites that on a regular basis in church, we say: I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Church and the communion of saints – the idea that the Spirit empowers us, not simply as individuals, but as we band together and understand truth together.

DAVE BAST

I think that is an important point. If we want to see Jesus, we do not just read the Bible on our own. We read it with others because they give us a better sense of perspective, and maybe can open our eyes to see things that He is saying or doing that we might be a little bit blind to. So there is always value in kind of the band of disciples who are following Jesus together. Hopefully this program can help you do that as well as we see Jesus and know God in and through Him.

MEG JENISTA

I hope so for our sakes...

DAVE BAST

Well, thanks for joining our Groundwork conversation, and don't forget, it is listeners like you asking questions and participating that keep our topics relevant to you life. So tell us what you think about what you are hearing and suggest topics or passages that you would like to hear on future Groundwork programs. Visit

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