

How To Get To Heaven

John 14:1-6

Pastor John Miller

In John 14:1-6, Jesus is speaking. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house..." I like that title for heaven "...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. And where I go you know, and the way you know."

Thank God for Thomas; he didn't hesitate to ask this question. "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.'"

Several years ago in USA Today, they found out that 80% of Americans believed in heaven. Not all of them believed they would go to heaven; 72% said they felt they had a good-to-excellent chance of going to heaven. So they had their fingers crossed, and they had their rabbit's foot in their pocket. "I believe in heaven, but I don't know if I'm going to go there." And it's interesting that those who believed they had a good chance of going to heaven said that 60% of their friends would not go to heaven. It makes me wonder who they were hangin' out with. There is only one other option to heaven, and you don't want to go there. You want to have your heart right with God and ready to go to heaven.

So in these verses we just read, Jesus talks about heaven. He calls it "My Father's house." When He tells them in verse 1, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me," He is in the upper room, hours before He went to the Cross. He had just said to the whole group, "One of you will betray Me" (John 13:21). And He would go from here back to heaven, to His Father's house. Their hearts were sad and sorrowful. Many times our hearts are troubled and sorrowful.

But Jesus said, "In My Father's house..." which is heaven "...are many mansions." I like the King James Bible. Years ago I read a translation that said, "many apartments." I laughed. No thank you! Give me the King James "mansions"! If Jesus could create all this universe in six days—and I believe He did—think about what He has done in the 2,000 years since He had gone "to prepare a place" for us in heaven! How beautiful it will be! So there are many mansions in "My Father's house."

Heaven is a real, prepared place. Verses 3-4 say, "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." And I think this is the first disclosure in the Bible of the rapture of the church. Jesus is not talking about His Second Coming; He's talking about His coming for the church, the bride of Christ, which could happen at any moment. "And where I go you know, and the way you know."

So heaven is a real place, heaven is His “Father’s house” and it is a place prepared for us.

Thomas—good, old Thomas—makes a statement and then asked this question: he said, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Thank you, Thomas! Sometimes he is called “doubting Thomas,” because he is always looking at the negative side of things.

Then Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me,” verse 6. It is one of the greatest statements Jesus ever made. Where Jesus said “I am,” it is the same statement that God made to Moses in the burning bush. Tell them, “I AM has sent me to you” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus said, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” And He said “I AM.” He’s claiming to be God.

He is “the way,” that is, to “the Father’s house”; He is “the truth,” that is, about the Father and how to know God; and He is “the life,” the life of God. So He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.”

The simple answer to the question, “How do I get to heaven?” is Jesus. “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12) than the name of Jesus. There is only one way to heaven, and that one way is Jesus Christ. So let’s be clear with no questions and no mistakes. Verse 6 says, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” “No one” in the Greek means “no one.” No one can get to heaven without going through Jesus Christ. We used to sing, “If you want to get to heaven, you can’t go around the Cross.” Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Some say that this is too exclusive or too narrow; Jesus can’t be the only way to the Father. Several years ago Oprah said that. She was on a YouTube video saying that. She said, “Jesus can’t be the only way to heaven.” How wrong she was. Jesus said that He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

So although it is exclusive and narrow, it should not be offensive, because it is true. Some say, “It’s too offensive; it’s too narrow. He can’t be the only way.” Why not? It’s true. Truth is that which corresponds to reality, and Jesus truly is “the way, the truth, and the life.” And as His own words say, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

In the statement “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” these words of Jesus meet man’s greatest need. Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve were enjoying three things in their relationship with God in the garden of Eden. Number one, they had fellowship and communion with God. Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve, our first parents, had fellowship and communion with God until sin entered the world, and they were separated from God. Number two, they knew the truth about God; they were not yet deceived by Satan, and they knew who God was. And number three, Adam and Eve possessed the life of God; they had eternal life. Had sin not entered the world through Satan, had they not disobeyed God and sinned, they would have gone on living in fellowship with and the knowledge of God and in the life of God.

I like what James Montgomery Boice said. He said, "However, when they disobeyed God..." referring to Adam and Eve "...and fell into sin, they lost their privilege. Instead of enjoying communion with God, they experienced alienation from Him. Instead of knowing the truth, they fell into falsehood and error. Instead of possessing life, they began to know death. This is our human condition. We are alienated from God, ignorant of the truth and condemned to spiritual and eventually physical death."

But the cool thing about these words of Jesus, in verse 6, is that they meet man's greatest need at each of these three levels. I want to look at all these three statements. First, we are separated from God because of our sin at birth, but Jesus is "the way." We need to come to Jesus; He is "the way" back to God. Jesus said, "I am the way."

Why are we separated from God? The answer is sin. You don't hear much about sin today. But the Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). In its essence, sin basically is missing the mark or missing the bullseye. If I were to shoot an arrow at a target and didn't hit the bullseye, I would be called a sinner; I missed the mark, missed the standard. So all of us have missed the mark. We haven't loved God. We've had other gods before Him.

God knows our heart. We've not kept the Ten Commandments. "You shall not steal." Well, messed up there. "You shall not covet." Try going through Costco and not covet. You buy stuff you don't even need, because it's inexpensive. "I don't even know what it is, but it's cheap; let's buy it!" "You shall not bear false witness." "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14-17).

So we've all sinned and been separated from God, but Jesus is "the way" to get back to God, our Creator. Jesus died on the Cross and removed our sin in order to reconcile us back to God. Jesus died on the Cross in order to carry away our sin and reconcile us back to God.

The etymology of the word "forgive" is "to carry away" or "to take away." When Jesus was coming on the scene of His ministry, John the Baptist, at the Jordan River, said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away..." or "carries away" or "bears away" "...the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The only perfect, sin substitute is Jesus Christ. He came to take away our sins. In Psalm 103:12, the psalmist said, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

If you haven't been forgiven, you need to come to Jesus Christ. Ask Him to forgive you. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The only way to get rid of that guilt and shame and alienation from God is to confess your sin, turn to Jesus and be forgiven, to be cleansed through the precious work of Christ's blood shed on the Cross.

Jesus has made provision for our sins at the Cross. Don't let pride keep you from Him. One of the main reasons that keep people from coming to Christ is their pride. That's why Jesus said that if you come to Him, you must come as a child (Matthew 18:3); you must come dependently,

humbly and trustingly and put your faith in Him.

Jesus is not only “the way” to be cleansed and forgiven of sin, but He is “the way” to the Father and the “Father’s house.” It is not a way but “the way.” Jesus didn’t come to talk about ways to get to heaven; He came to be the very one to bring us to heaven. Literally in the Greek, this would read, “I Myself am the way.” So He didn’t just teach us “the way,” He pointed to His Person; “I am the way.”

I like the illustration of an escalator. Some people say that Christianity is a crutch. It’s not a crutch; it’s a stretcher. You have to lay your whole weight on Him; you have to trust Him completely.

I think escalators are so cool. Thank God for escalators. Thank God for those long terminals that have the moving sidewalks. Praise the Lord! And I like to mess with escalators. I like to stand at the bottom and I see the stairs coming up and whoosh, they just appear. And when you’re coming down the escalator, whoosh, I just like to watch it disappear. I like to run up and run down and kind of freak people out. They’re kind of cool.

And you can walk up the escalators if you want, but why would you do that? Whenever my wife and I are at the airport, there are stairs and an escalator. She goes up the stairs—pray for her. I go up the escalator. I wave at her as I go by. She goes on the sidewalk and I go on the power sidewalk, and I wave at her as I go by and run down the power sidewalk. Praise God for it!

That’s like Jesus; He just carries you. You just put all your weight on Him, and He carries you and takes you to heaven. What it means to believe in Jesus is to put your weight on Him, rest in Him, to trust in Him.

Have you done that? Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ? People try to find God in nature. Some people try to find God by being good. “If I’m good enough, I can get to heaven.” If someone says, “I think I’m good enough to go to heaven,” ask them, “How good do you have to be to get to heaven?”

“I don’t know; just good.” Goodness is a relative term; you can’t really answer, “How good?” “Just really good!” And you can always find someone who is worse than you to compare yourself to. “They won’t go to heaven, but I think I’ve got a chance.”

In order to get to heaven, you must be perfect. You must be sinless. But “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” “There is none righteous, no, not one.”

Some people try to find God in religion, in external do’s and don’ts such as in baptism, in rites and rituals, in catechism, doing certain prayers, going to certain group meetings. But they do not forgive our sins. Only God in Christ can do that. Religion cannot save us. It’s not an external thing; it’s a personal relationship with God. It’s not precepts; it’s a Person. Jesus is “the way.” He is “the way” for you to be forgiven, for you to go to heaven, for you to have fellowship with the Father and to have the hope of heaven in your heart when you die.

The second thing Jesus said, in verse 6, is that He is “the truth.” We are ignorant of God, but Jesus is “the truth.” Jesus wants to bring us to God, and Jesus is also “the truth” about God.

There is truth and it is knowable. Some say that truth is not knowable. Truth is knowable. And truth is not relative; you can't have your own truth. Some people say, “Well, you have your truth and I have my truth.” It doesn't work that way. Sometimes I've asked people, “Do you believe in truth?”

They say, “No.”

Then I ask, “Is that a true statement?”

“I'm absolutely sure there is no truth!”

“How do you know that?”

“I just know that!”

It's a self-defeating argument. Truth is what corresponds to reality. Jesus said that He is “the truth,” and He is “the truth” about God.

In what way is Jesus “the truth” about God? When Adam and Eve fell in the garden, they believed Satan's lies. You either believe the lies of the devil, who is the enemy of God, or you believe God and His Word. God said to them in the garden of Eden, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). The devil told Adam and Eve, “You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5). So he lied to them and they believed him.

Paul said in Romans 1:25 that Adam and Eve “exchanged the truth of God for the lie.” That's one of the things the devil does; he lies to you about God. He'll say, “God isn't real. God doesn't love you. God cannot save you. There is no God, so once you die, there is no after-death.” He lies to you, and you believe his lies.

Jesus is “the truth” about God, because He is God. In verses 7-9, our text tells us that Philip was hearing about the Father's house, so he said, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” But 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.” Jesus came to reveal the Father. The Bible says, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” or “explained Him” (John 1:18). Jesus is the explanation or “the truth” about God.

Jesus is “the truth” as well as “the way” to God, because He is God. He can reveal God to us. He can reveal His Person; He's loving, He's gracious, He's merciful and He's kind. When you look at Jesus, you see His love for you. When you look at Jesus, you see that He is merciful,

you see He is kind and patient. That's God's heart, and you see the heart of God in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The third statement in verse 6 is that Jesus is "the life." We are dead spiritually, but Jesus brings us life. We are lost—Jesus is "the way"; we are deceived—Jesus is "the truth"; and we are dead—Jesus is "the life." Death is the result of sin. Every time someone dies, it is an indication of the reality of sin.

And we also are spiritually separated from God. We don't know God; we don't know the truth about God. We don't have the life of God, so we're dead in sin. God told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." They didn't die immediately, but they did eventually die.

Someone said, "Old postmen never die; they just lose their zip." "Old doctors never die; they just lose their patients." Here's my favorite: "Old fishermen never die; they just smell that way."

The Bible says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). The statistics on death are quite impressive: 10 out of every 10 people living will die. "What man can live and not see death?" (Psalm 89:48). Not only that, but life is brief, fragile and like a vapor of smoke. Life "appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). None of us have a lease on life. None of us can guarantee that we'll be here tomorrow.

Are you ready to die? Will you go to heaven? Have you trusted Jesus Christ?

Jesus told the story of the prodigal son, in Luke 15:11-32. A man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, "Give me my inheritance, the lot that falls to me." He took his money and went to a far country. Sometimes we think that if we can just go somewhere else, we'll be happy. He wasted his substance on riotous living. He began to be in want and ended up in a pigpen feeding the pigs. Eventually he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

And as he was on the road back to his father's house, the father saw him afar off down the road and began to run to his son. No doubt as he ran toward his son, the son thought, Oh, no! I'm really gonna get it! But then the father threw his arms around his son and smothered him with kisses. He put a ring on his finger, a robe on him and shoes on his feet. He said, "Let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." They began to rejoice that he who was lost had come back to his father.

There are some who don't know if they will go to heaven. You go to church, you believe in God, but you don't really know if you'll go to heaven, because you haven't repented of your sins, believed Jesus Christ and been born again.

Have you been born again? Jesus said, in John 3:3, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see

the kingdom of God.” You can’t get to heaven unless you have a spiritual rebirth. It’s called “regeneration”; you’re given new life through the Spirit.

Are you going to heaven, or when you die, you’ll be separated from God in hell? Do you know the truth? Jesus is “the truth.” Do you have the life of God in your soul? John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten...” or “unique” “...Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” That’s the life of God in your soul.

I’m preaching this message, because I want you to be sure that you will go to heaven; that you have that assurance. Just coming to church and just believing in God is not enough.

You ask, “Well, what do I have to do?” You first have to realize, “I’m a sinner separated from God.” You can’t get there by your own goodness or good deeds. You can’t get there by righteous works of religion. You must get there by faith and faith alone. The Bible says, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). So you have to put your faith in Christ. The first thing you have to do is realize you’re a sinner. The second thing you have to do is repent and change your mind, which means to turn around, go the other direction and follow Christ. Abandon your sin and third, receive Christ as your Savior.

So realize you have sinned, repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And I’m going to give you an opportunity to get right with God, to give your heart to God.

I don’t believe there is anyone who reads what I’m saying is reading it by accident. And I don’t believe it’s an accident that the Lord had me preach this message.

Will you go to heaven when you die? You can’t guess. You can’t hope. You can’t cross your fingers and hang onto a rabbit’s foot. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

If you haven’t done that, you have to do that now. You need to do that today. “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).