

Jesus—The Way, The Truth, The Life – John 14:1-7

How would you finish this sentence? *Jesus is my _____*. As followers of Jesus Christ, you and I bear the name of Jesus, but Jesus is more than just a name that identifies whom we follow above all others. So how would you finish that sentence: “*Jesus is my...*”? During his public ministry, Jesus would occasionally ask his disciples a similar question to find out how they would “finish the sentence.” For example, Jesus once asked his disciples, “**Who do people say that I am?**” (Matthew 16:13) After they provided a number of answers which all fell short, Jesus then asked them, “**Who do you say that I am?**” (16:15) Peter spoke on behalf of his fellow disciples and “finished the sentence” with a beautiful confession of faith. “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” (16:16)

A couple months later, though, the disciples weren’t so certain anymore. They were gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem celebrating Passover. They knew something bad was going to happen. Jesus had told them that one of their own would betray him to his enemies that very night. Jesus had even warned Peter that he would publicly deny his Lord three times. Yet for all the outward bravado that Peter and his fellow disciples showed in that upper room, they were terribly troubled. They knew that Jesus—their teacher and friend—would be taken from them, and they would be left like sheep without a shepherd. So Jesus “finished the sentence” for them. He calmed their troubled hearts with words of heavenly comfort and words of absolute certainty. “**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**” Jesus was more than just their teacher and friend. He was the only way to the Father and the only source of truth and life.

Today many people consider those words of Jesus to be too absolute, too exclusive, even intolerant. Jesus leaves no room for alternate paths to heaven. Jesus leaves no room for alternate sources of truth. Jesus leaves no room for any other source of life outside of himself. Yet there’s a reason why Jesus is so “exclusive.”

Jesus is my only way to heaven. Jesus is my only way to God the Father. I can’t get there by earning points with God or stockpiling the good I think I’ve done for others or by assuming that only really bad people go to hell. No, left to myself and my own sins, one day I will have to stand before the holy God and face his just and eternal condemnation. Yet through Jesus alone, I see not the fearful sight of the holy God, but instead I see God’s heart moved by unconditional love to rescue me and open heaven to me.

Jesus is my only source of truth. Hundreds of different voices demand to be heard every single day. So many of those voices appeal to your sinful desires and personal areas of sinful weakness. They all demand to be heard and believed trying to convince you to buy into their message, but they all seem to end the same way leaving you broken and helpless and headed for hell. Yet the sweet, healing sound of the Gospel cuts through all that noise and provides the only way to life eternal, the only source of forgiveness for your guilt, the only message that brings true peace and hope and life—the message of Jesus—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Hear now a reading from John 14.

Jesus—My Help – Psalm 30 & Psalm 46

When you read Psalm 30, you can see King David’s joy practically jump off the page. He was in trouble, even headed for despair and death. He cried out to the Lord, and the Lord of free and faithful grace delivered him. You see, David had arrogantly decided to count all the men in his kingdom capable of serving in his military. David was stroking his ego thinking his kingdom’s power was pretty great, so the Lord humbled him by sending the angel of death to bring a plague on Israel. The Lord stopped the plague at the location where David’s son Solomon would one day build a grand and glorious temple to the Lord of grace. David was humbled. His arrogance had brought devastation to his kingdom, yet the Lord in his grace delivered him and his people. So David and his people rejoiced. They rejoiced in the Lord who was their Help.

Jesus is my help. From infancy, you and I have been all too familiar with our need for help. Sometimes you find yourself in a situation of your own making, not unlike David crying out to the Lord for help. Other times you find yourself in a situation not of your own making, but one that brings sorrow and difficulty into your life because it seems like God has turned his anger towards you or has turned his back on you. You find yourself in the depths of doubt and despair, feeling as if you’re being crushed in the dust.

Yet when you cry out to the Lord of grace, what does he do? Does he abandon you in your time of need? Does he forget about you and refuse to help you or does he guide all things for your good? The Lord heals and rescues and spares and turns sadness into joy because of what he accomplished for you through Jesus.

Psalm 30 is not just a song that King David wrote to celebrate God delivering him from his own selfish arrogance, but it's also a psalm that looks ahead to Jesus, the One who would not remain in the grave, the One who would not turn to dust, the One whose resurrection from the dead and whose victory over death turns our weeping into dancing. Since he has done that, I need never fear, because Jesus is my Help!

Hear now a reading from Psalm 30.

Jesus—My Joy – Philippians 3:4b-14

This summer we spent time with the Apostle Paul, while he was under house arrest in Rome awaiting trial before the Roman emperor. We spent time taking a closer look at the letter he wrote to the Christians in the city of Philippi and we were constantly encouraged to **“Rejoice!”** At the very heart of that letter, Paul reveals the primary reason why he was able to rejoice no matter what he endured for the sake of Christ. In fact, he was willing to give up everything for the sake of Christ, and he had a lot to give up!

He had an impressive résumé. Paul was a Jew from birth circumcised eight days after he was born according to the Law of Moses. He could trace his ancestry all the way back to Benjamin, the beloved youngest son of the Hebrew patriarch Jacob. He was a Hebrew's Hebrew who was also a Pharisee, well known for their extreme obedience over and above God's Law in the Ten Commandments. He was so zealous in his Jewish faith that he hunted down Christians to wipe out the name of their blaspheming leader, Jesus of Nazareth. No one could find an outward fault with Paul. He had the respect and honor of his people. He had been educated by the top rabbinic scholars in Jerusalem. You could say every Jewish mom wanted her boys to be like him, but Paul was willing, even eager to flush all that down the toilet. Why? Jesus was his joy above all else.

“I consider them worthless dung that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—that righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” Knowing Jesus was all that mattered to Paul, so he was willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of Christ. Knowing Jesus moved Paul to keep struggling and straining joyfully on the journey through this life until Christ his Lord brought him home to heaven.

What's your source of joy? Is it in the worthless trash of this life or in the eternal treasure of Christ Jesus your Lord? Consider what Jesus gives you—his perfect record on your account, his perfect keeping of God's holy Law, and his perfect payment for all your sins. That's righteousness before God—not what you do or who you are or where you come from or who your daddy is, but what Jesus did for you—and that fills your heart with joy! Compared to Jesus, all that old stuff that filled your life before is nothing more than worthless trash. That joy in Jesus helps you in times of difficulty and heartache, trouble and grief, even in those times when you might have to suffer for the sake of Christ. That joy in Jesus helps you to keep struggling and straining towards your heavenly goal confident that what awaits you in heaven is already yours. Rejoice because Jesus is your Joy!

Hear now a reading from Philippians 3.

Jesus—My Friend – Luke 11:1-9

Isn't it remarkable how Jesus makes God accessible to us? The true God takes on human flesh and becomes a human being like you and me growing from infancy to adulthood. Like Jesus told his disciples in the upper room, if you see him, you see the Father. No mortal, sinful human being could stand in the presence of the holy God and live, and yet we see Jesus on the pages of Scripture and we look into the face of God. We see not God the holy judge, but God our Friend in the face of Jesus. We see Jesus between us and the holy God interceding for us with his perfect life and innocent death, and we know that we have nothing to fear. We can approach God because Jesus is our friend and he has opened the way for us through his holy, precious blood.

So in all things and for all things, we come to our Lord in prayer. It is true what Joseph Scriven wrote, ***“What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry ev'rything to God in prayer!”*** (*Christian Worship* 411:1) Because Jesus is our friend, you and I can approach our heavenly Father as dear children climbing up on the lap of their dear father bringing him whatever request great or small, whatever is on our minds great or small, troubling or joyful. Because Jesus is our friend, the Lord answers our prayers. He takes the weight of our burdens and worries on his own shoulders. He gives us strength in our weakness and provides rest for our weary hearts. Then he urges us to keep coming back. Why? Jesus is our Friend!

Hear now a reading from Luke 11.

Jesus—My Savior – Revelation 7:9-17

What will be the most beautiful sight when you open your eyes and see heaven for the first time? Will it be the glorious gates of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, dressed like a beautiful bride on her wedding day? Will it be the shining throne of God at the center of that heavenly city? Will it be the throngs of saints and angels gathered around the throne of the Lamb of God praising him with all their might for all eternity? Will it be the loved ones in the Lord who have gone before you? Will it be the white robe you will wear washed clean in the blood of the Lamb? Will it be the sheer joy and beauty of actually being in the kingdom of heaven? Or will it be something else that is more beautiful, more fair, more stunning than any other sight in all creation?

While all those sights that I described will fill you with joy and happiness beyond belief, there is something you will see that will make all of that pale in comparison. You will see Jesus—face to face! You will look into the eyes of Jesus—and see God's gracious love in its purest, most concentrated form, unconditional love for you. You will see the nail-scarred feet of your Savior rushing to welcome you home. You will see the nail-pierced hands of the One who lived his life and gave his life and took his life back up again for you, and you will see his arms wrap around you in an embrace of pure joy and heavenly love because you who once were dead are alive forevermore. You will see Jesus and without a second thought you will join your voice with the great multitude that no one can count from every nation, tribe, people, and language. With every fiber of your being, you will praise the One who loves you so, the One who deserves all praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength because he is our Savior-God for ever and ever. You will see your beautiful Savior and you will rejoice forever. In that glorious kingdom of heaven, Jesus, your Savior, will watch over you and care for you and be your shepherd and wipe away every tear from your eyes forevermore. You will see Jesus—your help, your joy, your hope, your life, your Friend, your Savior! Amen.

Hear now a reading from Revelation 7.