

"You Know The Way!"

If we consider what people thought years ago about life in the future, we realize how hard it is to know what's ahead. What if everyone had believed the U.S. Patent Office worker who in 1899 said, "Everything that can be invented has been invented?" Or what if people in the 19th century had believed this memo from Western Union: "The telephone has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication?" One source, however, is never wrong about the future. We turn to it again today – God's perfect Word. The Savior tells His children where they're going and how they're going to get there.

"You Know The Way!" Jesus has shown us the Way to God, through Him. Trust him! The Savior spoke the words of our text on the night he was betrayed. In chapter 13, Jesus predicted his betrayal, he told his disciples that he was going away (his ascension to heaven was soon to occur), he predicted that one of his own disciples, Peter, would deny him. You can imagine that the hearts of the disciples were very heavy. Such a heaviness of heart in that upper room prompted Jesus to tell the disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." He gave the disciples a number of reasons why they should not be upset or perplexed, among them was this one: "You know the Way to the place where I am going."

The question Thomas asked, however, quite often reflects our own questions: "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the Way?" Apparently not really recognizing that he was looking at the Way himself, Thomas would almost have had Jesus point out on a map the way to the heavenly Father's mansion.

Thomas' question is not as absurd as we might think. The same question is still asked by many today even after they have seen the Way Jesus Christ. Jesus has done everything to show us the way to God – he lived for us, died for us, rose from the dead and has left us the testimony of his voice, the Scriptures, but we often still look for something more. With a good measure of fear and doubt, we want some greater assurance of God's presence and where it is we are going.

You have seen the Way to the Father – the Way is not a procedure, it's not a thing or material – the Way is a person, Jesus Christ. "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." When it comes down to it, we are not saved by a principle or by some cosmic force, we are saved by a person, Jesus Christ. The only way we can have contact with the heavenly Father is through Jesus Christ. Realize what this is saying, what Jesus is saying – all other ways of trying to reach God – through our good works, through some other "god" are futile. There is only one way – through the Christ who died and rose again for our salvation.

And when we look in faith to Christ, we see the Father. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father." Jesus answered: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Philip desired a great thing – but he did not realize that in Jesus we see the heavenly Father. Jesus is "The image of the invisible God," we are told in Colossians. "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being," we read in Hebrews.

What is so important about seeing the Father? Simply put – without Him, there is no life, no hope. The Father is the source of life. But sin – our sin – had separated us from the Father. The way to his home was blocked by your sin. But we can't live without the Father! That is true of all people even if all do not yet realize it – no one will ever live if they do not have a living

relationship with the Father of the heavenly lights. "But how can you ever really find God," man in his spiritual ignorance suggests. "God is so far out there – how can you ever know Him?"

At a funeral, the pastor said that Jesus is the only lasting source of comfort. Afterward a woman came up and said to him, "You preachers are all alike. All you talk about is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" "That's true," the pastor replied. "What comfort do you have to offer to the grieving family?" The woman was speechless for a few minutes and then said, "You're right. At least you have Jesus." When we experience loss, deep loss, someone may give us a hug, show a kind deed or share a tear but these gestures won't answer life's most urgent questions about death and what comes after. Only the Scriptures point us to a Christ who has been raised from the dead and lives eternally. Praise God – Jesus is the Way! Through the Bible, through God's Word, we see the Truth because God shows us what He's done in Jesus. Therefore, through Jesus, we have the best kind of life – life with God. The word "life" describes someone who has all kinds of life and vitality. Such vitality God gives to us through the Way, Jesus Christ. "I have come," Jesus said, "That they may have life." Imagine! In Jesus, we have a connection with the God from whom life itself springs. That connection is established and maintained through the Word! Listening to someone else reading Scripture a blind man heard something he never heard before. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me," he heard. He did not hear of the valley of death but of the shadow of death. "There is a difference," the man thought. "God is with us now and will be with us in the experience of death because he has given us life and God will walk with us through all of life, a life over which death can only cast its shadow."

You have seen the Way – do you trust him? That is the response which Jesus would have us make: "Trust in God; trust also in me." The opening words of this text have been read at many funeral services: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God; trust also in me." These words are a great comfort for those who have experienced a loss. They assure us of a heavenly home: "In my Father's house are many rooms. I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

Let us also realize that these words are for our life now. The Gospel asserts that we have been united with Christ through faith. Our text also comforts those who are living now with perplexity. It comforts those who feel uneasy, who perhaps are going through a period of change in their lives. "Why is life so painful?" someone asks. "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

Jesus' conversation with Philip accurately describes the situation of the church of believers as it lives its life with Jesus HERE on earth. Philip came up to Jesus and said: "Show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Philip expresses something which many of us have felt from time to time: he wants to see more of God than God himself permits us to see. Haven't you picked up a Bible, read the comforting words of the Savior and still had the desire for God to visibly appear and comfort? Haven't you longed for Jesus to appear when a loved one dies and hope the Lord himself would raise him from the dead?

Jesus invites us in our text to live by faith rather than by sight. Did you notice all the "don't you believes" in our text? Just as the disciples and we ourselves question the Savior from time to time, questioning if he really does care about us, so Jesus makes a claim and demands from us a trust which is greater than a simple nod of the head. The Savior is calling you to follow him confidently, trusting that He is leading you to the heaven He's won for you.

Think of Thomas who would later doubt the words of the Savior as he saw his Lord crucified. How often we question the Lord and His ways when we encounter those circumstances that bring sorrow and there's bitter disappointment! When life isn't what we hoped it would be, do we like Peter choose to follow the Lord at a distance, from the shadows instead of walking with Him joyfully and confidently?

Are you frustrated and looking for that "easy answer" which will eliminate all your problems? Jesus asks us: "Don't you believe?" "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." Some scientists tell us that in less than 10 million years the earth will be unable to sustain life because the sun will be too hot. This is depressing news for those who put all their hope in this world. But for those who trust in Christ and what He has said, this should not be surprising.

Would he have gone to such trouble if he wasn't serious about your believing Him? Would he have died on the cross for you if he didn't want your heart centered on Him? Would he have told you about the Father's house if he didn't want you to be a part of it? "If it were not so, I would have told you." This is also sound advice – instead of spending all our time thinking about where we are and what we are currently experiencing, Jesus would have us think more about where we are going to be one day – in mansions prepared by God Himself!

Jesus tells us about a blessing which comes to you who walk by faith in him: you, his disciple, will do "even greater things," he says. See how close to God we really are, when we see what God enables us to do through faith in Christ. By the time John wrote these words, greater works in scope had already been performed. 3,000 were baptized on Pentecost. The good news of the Way was being preached around the world. Works of a greater scope continue to occur. You are to "Declare the praise of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light?" Since we're looking forward to the life to come, God works through us in this world as we pray, live and witness for Him!

Many of you have taken trips which were long enough that, on the way, you wondered if the journey was worth it. Getting lost, car problems, sick kids. But you kept going because you knew that it would be worth it. Christ's followers also experience difficulties, setbacks and tragedies on their journey. Troubled today? Look ahead! God has reserved something special for you. Heaven will be worth the trip!