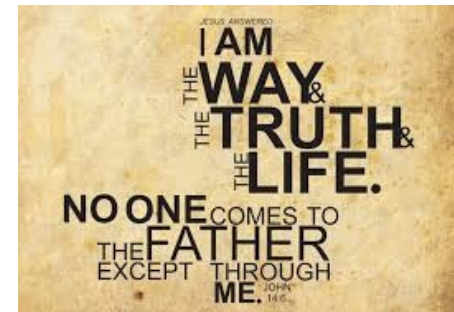


*The Way, The Truth
And
The Life*



Looking Unto Jesus

(Over the next several issues of **BC** we will be publishing a series of lessons that Brother Jeff McFadden taught at Ozark Christian Camp in June 2016. It is a challenging series of lessons that are very well done. We thank Jeff for making these lessons available for us to publish. I have known Jeff all of his life and one summer years ago he worked with me in Fayetteville as a preacher trainee. I cherish very much the friendship with Jeff and his family over the years. We pray that God will give Jeff and Angela many years of useful service in his vineyard. ...lsg)

Series Introduction

What is your goal as a Christian? What are you focusing on and striving towards in your walk with God? As families and as a Church what are we looking toward and setting as our goal?

Someone might be thinking, “Well, my goal as a Christian is to get to Heaven!” And that isn’t a bad answer or a wrong answer, but I don’t necessarily think that it is a complete answer. And someone else might be thinking, “Well, our goal is to follow the word of God. To do what God tells us to do and worship the way God tells us to.” Again, that isn’t a bad answer, but I don’t think it is a complete answer. And then someone else is thinking, “I know, Jeff!! I’ve got it!! My goal is to love. To love my neighbor. To love my church and to love my family. Even to love my enemy!” Again, that isn’t a bad answer, but I don’t think it is a complete answer. Well, OK, Jeff. Quit telling us what you think the wrong answer is and tell us what the correct answer is.

Hebrews 12:1-2, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of

eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

Peter says that Jesus has the words of eternal life. He is the way that leads to God. He is source of truth from God. And he has the words that give us eternal life.

Jesus is the vine that provides for his branches. He is the living water that quenches our spiritual thirst. He is the good shepherd that watches over his sheep. He is the savior that stood at the door of the tomb of Lazarus and when he spoke Lazarus rose from dead to a new life. And today he is calling us to a new life. A life no longer burdened by our sin and our guilt. An abundant life, both in this life and the life to come.

Conclusion

But in order for us to enter into that abundant life, we must look unto Jesus. We must look unto him and His Word as the single source of truth, as the way to God, and as the source of life. All he asks for us to do is to look to him and to love him. But how do we love Him?

Jesus would say in John 14:15, “If you love me keep my com-

mandments...” And part of those commandments is to lay down our lives for him. To allow our faith to move us to repent of our sins and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And then to bow down before our King and submit to him in baptism. To surrender our rebel lives to him and acknowledge him as **THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE**. And then pick up our cross and follow him for all the days of our lives. Will you do that today?

...Jeff McFadden
Mesquite, TX



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Disciples of Christ, when our husbands or wives or children look to us, do they see Jesus? Do they see the Truth of God reflected in the body of Christ and its members?

The world doesn't need a church that looks like the rest of the world. They don't need a church and they don't need Christians that are no different from what they see every day. They need to look to us and see a reflection of Jesus. They need to see his Truth in our lives. They need to see Jesus. They need to see THE truth, the Authentic will of God

Jesus as the Life – Vitality

After Jesus says that he is THE way and THE truth, he says that he is THE life. Again, he is not saying that he knows a way, that he can show you a truth, that he can tell one of the ways to life. He says that he IS life. That he is the source from which life comes and is sustained.

We read earlier John's introduction to his gospel and how the Word was with God and the Word was God. And look back at verse 3 in that passage. John says that all things were made by him. He was present and participated in the creation of all things.

Paul would later write to the Colossian church about Jesus and say, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him."

But Jesus as the source of life is even deeper than just the idea of the physical creation that we see and feel and live in. Jesus is making the claim that, not only is he the source of physical life, but he is the only source that provides spiritual life to us.

In John 6, Jesus has just performed the miracle of feeding 5000 with a few fishes and loaves of bread. And afterwards, he begins to teach the people and he tells them that He is the living bread that came down from heaven. And if you eat this living bread you will live forever. Many of the disciples heard this and were confused and many left Jesus, walked away from him because of it. So Jesus turns to the apostles and asks them, "Do you want to go away also? Are you going to leave like the rest of the people?" And Peter had a very profound answer to Jesus' question

John 6:68, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of

witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

In Chapter 11 of Hebrews, we can read about the men and the women of the Old Testament who, through their faith, followed the will of God and waited on the promises that God had given his people. But they all died before the fulfillment of the promise

Then we turn the page to chapter 12 and the writer begins to use the metaphor of a race to describe what is in front of us now. And in this race, he reminds us to keep in mind the example of faith that these men and women of old gave. He urges us to get rid of sin in our lives that weighs us down and hinders us in our race. And then in verse 2 he tells us what our focus should be during this race, what we should be looking to during our race. He tells us to "Look Unto Jesus".

He doesn't tell us to think about the finish line. He doesn't tell

us to focus on our competition. He doesn't tell us to think about how hard the race is. He tells us to Look Unto Jesus. To look unto the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and is now seated at the right hand of God.

And if we will do that, if we will focus on Jesus and look to him as our example and leader to follow, then we will successfully navigate this race that is front of us. If we do that, if we fix our gaze on Jesus and follow his example, then all of the other things will fall into place. We will love one another and we will love our enemies. We will follow the will of God and hold fast to his word. And one day, we will be home in heaven. If we set our goal as Christians to look unto Jesus, it will transform our lives. It will change our families. It will strengthen our congregations. And it will lead to the throne of God.

C.H. Spurgeon once said, "We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by 'looking unto Jesus'. Keep your eye simply on him; let his death, his sufferings, his

merits, his glories, his intercession, be fresh upon your mind; when you wake in the morning look to him; when you lie down at night look to him. Do not let your hopes or fears come between you and Jesus; follow hard after him, and he will never fail you.”

So in this series, we will do that. We will look unto Jesus. We will talk about the teaching and the example that he left us. And we will discover that if we will look unto Jesus, how it will change our lives and transform us into the disciples that God wants us to be.

And there are so many stories that we could look at and talk about. We could listen to a late night conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus and hear how God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. We could learn about a Samaritan woman who came to a well to draw water and learned about the living water that would quench her spiritual thirst. We could see Jesus feed five thousand with a few fish and loaves of bread. We could witness the crowd dropping their stones on the ground as Jesus saves the adulterous woman. And we could see the tears flow down Jesus’ face as he wept at the tomb of Lazarus and hear the

authority in his voice as he told Lazarus to rise from the dead.

And while those things might be mentioned throughout this series, we are going to be focusing on 5 other passages or stories that occur during the final few days of Jesus’ ministry. We will watch as Jesus gives his disciples an example of service and love when he kneels down to wash their feet. We will look into the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus faces temptation and as he prepares to drink the bitter cup. We will look to a hill called Golgotha and see where God’s justice and God’s love meet. And we will look into an empty tomb and see the hope of a resurrected savior. We will turn our gaze to Jesus and look unto him who is the founder and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Looking Unto Jesus... The Way, the Truth, and the Life

You can learn a lot about somebody from what they say and do as they approach the end of their life. As the years pass on and people approach the end of their time here on earth, they begin to think about what is really important. The day to day stuff that

the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

We are told that the Word has always existed. He was with God and, in fact, was God. That he took part in the creation of all things. And that this personification of the Truth and Wisdom of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus was more than just a man. He was the full expression and embodiment of the will of God, of the Truth that God revealed to us. He is the light that shines in the darkness to show us the path to God. The truth that is revealed in Jesus leads us to God.

John would later build upon this line of reasoning when he writes in 1 John 1:5-7, “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

John says that if we walk in darkness, we lie and don’t practice the truth. So how do we practice the truth? Where do we look to find this truth that we must practice? That means that we look to Jesus and follow his example. We look to his life and his teachings. And when we do that we find truth.

If you look to me, unfortunately, you won’t always find truth. You will find sin. You will find pride. You will find things that I say that aren’t always right. But if we look unto Jesus, he will never fail us. He is the Word. He is the truth revealed by God to us.

And that leave us, as the Church, with a great responsibility. When the world looks to us as the church and as individual

countless other manmade idols. The Christian acknowledges God as the source of life.

Of course, that is not to say that Christianity is an exclusive club that only certain people can join. Quite the contrary, the grace of God has appeared to all men and God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and look unto Jesus and follow the way, and the truth and life to him. And that way, that truth, and that life is Jesus. He makes this exclusive claim. Will you accept that or will you reject it?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that the gate is narrow and difficult is the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it. And he is not saying that the way is a riddle that is difficult to decipher or in a place that is hidden. Rather he is saying that few people will accept the way that Jesus came to show us. Few will look to Jesus as the exclusive way to God and trust and truly follow him.

Jesus says that he is the Way. He is our example in life. He and the word of God are the single source of our doctrine and teaching. He exclusively the Way to God

Jesus as the Truth – Authenticity

Christ's second statement in John 14:6, after he tells us that he is THE way to God, is that he is the Truth. He makes the statement that He is THE source of truth. And, again, this is more than him saying that he knows the truth and that he can tell us about the truth. He is saying that he IS the truth.

I think it is interesting to look at the how John opens his gospel and introduces Jesus onto the scene. It is much different than the other 3 gospels. No manger scene. No wise men. Instead, a profound description of the appearance of the Son of God that gives us valuable insight into the nature and purpose of the Son of God

John 1:1-14, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about

consumes so much of our lives begins to fade away and people begin to focus on what really matters to them.

As Jesus reaches the final few days of his ministry and life, he sits down with his disciples and takes the time to speak with them and he relays to them vital things that they need to know before his departure. He speaks to them about what is vitally important to them as his disciples, as people he loves, and we really get a sense of what was important to Jesus.

In the next installment of this series, we will discuss the Pass-over Meal or Last Supper and some of the things that occurred during that meal. But in this this installment, I want for us to focus on a part of this conversation that Jesus has with his disciples after the meal was completed. Jesus is speaking to them about these things that are really important to him, and this will help lay the foundation for our discussion for the rest of the week.

John 13:36-14:7, "Simon Peter said unto, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus

answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

This is after the Last Supper has concluded. Jesus and the apostles are gathered around the table and Jesus begins to teach them about what is going to happen after he leaves.

Peter is confused by what Jesus is saying. "What do you mean Jesus? You're leaving? And what do you mean I can't follow you where you go? I would die for you! I would certainly follow you anywhere that you go!" But Jesus tells him that before this night is over Peter will act

like he doesn't even know who Jesus is.

Then as the 14th chapter of John begins, Jesus begins to describe where he is going. He says that he going to prepare a place for them and in this place are many mansions. And where he is going, they can go also. And he tells them that they know where he is going and they know how to get there.

Thomas, like I'm sure the rest of the apostles at that table, was still confused. He says, "We don't know where you are going. And we certainly don't know the way to get there!"

And then in verse 6, Jesus tells them, "I am the way, I am the Truth, I am the life. I am going to my Father and if you are going to follow me where I am going, to the Father, you must follow me. I am the way to God."

What an amazing statement made by Jesus. He says, "Look Unto Me." Look unto Jesus! I am the way to the Father, I am the revealed truth of the Father, and I am the source of life. Look unto to me and Follow Me. And I will lead you to my Heavenly Father.

There are 3 aspects or 3 words that I want for us to notice about this statement that Jesus makes
1) Exclusivity 2) Authenticity 3) Vitality

The "Single Source of Truth" - Exclusivity

The first thing that I want for us to notice about this statement is The Exclusivity of the Claims of Jesus.

In my career, I have spent the last 11 years in the corporate world. And during that time you hear all kinds of corporate "buzz words" that put you to sleep when you see them on a power point presentation. "Synergy", "Paradigm Shift", "Outside the Box". And usually my eyes glaze over when I see something like that. But recently a big trend and buzzword that you hear a lot in the world of Visual Analytics and System and Process Engineering and caught my attention is the idea of a "Single Source of Truth". A single source for data or analysis on which the organization is able to make all of its decisions. A single source of truth that the entire company can point to and say, "This is the standard. This is the Truth". And Jesus, here in John 14, is making the claim that he is the "Single Source of Truth".

In today's age of tolerance and inclusion, statements like this made by Jesus should snap us back into focus. It may be hard for some people to stomach. It may be uncomfortable for us to teach to the world sometimes. It may not fit well with the crowd and with the world. But Jesus stakes claim here as the exclusive, final, and only way to God. He leaves no ambiguity in this statement.

He did not say, "I am A way." He did not say, "I know A truth." He did not say, "I am ONE of the sources of life." He unequivocally announces, "I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life. You CANNOT go to God except through ME."

And with this statement that Jesus makes, we are forced to make a decision. Either accept him as Lord and Master, accept that he alone is the way to God, or reject him and reject his teachings. We either accept him; all of him and all of his teachings. Or we reject him and reject his teachings. There is no middle ground.

The apostle Peter would later echo these sentiments when he would say speaking of Jesus, "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Paul would later tell the Ephesian church, "There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

And in today's world many people recoil at such exclusivity and definitiveness. If all roads lead to heaven, how can Christ make such an exclusive claim? Judaism would say that Jesus was not the Messiah. The Christian believes that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. Both cannot be right. Islam claims that Jesus was merely a prophet and teaches that He wasn't crucified. The Christian believes that Jesus is more than a prophet; that He is our prophet, priest, and king; that he was the spotless Lamb of God who was sent to die on the cross for our sins. Both cannot be correct. The Buddhist looks to reach Nirvana after hundreds of reincarnated lives. Christianity teaches that we have one life and one death, after which we face one judgment and an eternity in heaven or hell. The Atheist refuses to even acknowledge the existence of a divine creator, instead choosing to worship at the altar of materialism, hedonism, environmentalism, or