

John 14:16
Week 6 in the Series "Who's Verse is it Anyway?"

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Good morning. If we haven't had a chance to meet face to face. My name is Dominic Tuttle. I'm the director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries here at St Paul's and I have the honor and privilege and joy of sharing God's word with you today.

John Chapter 14, verse 6. *"Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for your word once again, and that any one of us at any time can open up the Bible and let our eyes settle upon the words that you inspired so long ago. And you can speak to each and every one of us into our lives, into our situations, into our challenges that we don't need years and years of training and education to glean wisdom and hear you speaking to us through your word. What I pray that you would bless this time. Bless us all. Open our eyes and our ears to see and hear what you would say to us. We thank you. We praise you, Lord. Amen.

I have probably said this every single time I get to touch on the Gospel of John. I love the Gospel of John. Something about the way it is written resonates with me. You may be familiar with the Synoptic Gospels, as they're referred to Matthew, Mark and Luke that follow the same synopsis. They all hit many of the same beats, covering different things with different perspectives. But those all share something in common. Scholars believe that the Gospel of Mark was written down first, and then Luke and Matthew might have built their Gospels based on that same synopsis. That's great. Good consistency of message there. John just does his own thing. And maybe that's why I kind of like the Gospel of John, because I feel like I like to watch someone else do something first. I like to see Pastor David draw a verse out of a hat and then preach a sermon a couple of times before I go ahead and try it. I like to observe first.

Whenever I have been in training situations; I've had a couple of different kinds. My very first job, I was bagging food at an A&W back in Aztec, New Mexico. If you're not familiar with A&W, it's a drive-in restaurant. fantastic root beer, if I do say so myself, I had free root beer as long as I was working there, so that was nice. Just keep topping up. I was bouncing on sugar the whole time, but the method of training I received there was pretty straightforward. Someone walked me through every step. First, we're going to do this. Now we're going to do this like I've done the first one, now you do the second one. Okay, let's correct this here. It was great. I was up and running within 2 hours, I could do the entire job. Granted, I was 15 and I was putting food into bags. The level of complexity was not high.

The next job I had was a tad different. I worked for a blacksmith. First, I was in his shop, not the workshop, literally the storefront selling the things that he made. I would take custom orders from people. I would dust a lot because whenever you have a lot of things sitting still, dust collects. But then after a while, he said to me, I want to get you into the forge so that you have a better idea of what it is you're selling. You can talk about it better. I thought, okay, that sounds interesting. I go along to the Forge, and I've always had a bit of an artistic tendency. I would say I've been doodling,

sculpting, I love building, making stuff. I took to blacksmithing very quickly. But the training was not like bagging food. For one, you're dealing with metal. It's very hard. It's very strong. And when it's been sitting in a coal fire for about 2 minutes, it's very hot. And my boss gave me a wonderful piece of advice during my training. It was, if you ever pick up a hot piece of metal without a glove, you will drop it really fast. I only did it once. You see, sometimes a piece of metal doesn't have to be glowing bright red or orange to still be really hot. And one time I didn't have my leather gloves on, and I picked up a piece and I dropped it so fast I didn't even burn my hand. My body just knew what to do. I'd call that some earlier training that God gave me. We all have some instinct there, which I appreciate, and I still have all my fingers. But training with the blacksmith, I worked with him for two years in the Forge. I knew how to build a fire with coal. I knew how to select the correct piece of metal, the right tools for the basic jobs that I was given. I knew how to heat, where to heat, how to draw out the metal, how to bend and shape, how to use the power tools, the power hammers. I learned how to use dyes to get specific shapes bent into the metal. Together, my boss and I built a huge, elaborate gate. It was two sides that would swing open. One side was an immense sun, with a giant spiral in the middle and rays coming out in different directions. And the other side was a river with trees all made out of iron pieces with the requirement that their dogs could not get through the gate. So, we couldn't leave any big gaps. It took a lot of problem solving and it took a lot of learning that I hadn't even done yet. But every single day I was given the same three tasks to begin with. Come in, clean out the old fire, build a new fire, and catch up on whatever wasn't finished. That was my training. That's how I learned. I had to learn by following my boss every day, no matter where he went. He'd say, Come look at this. I'd come over and he'd say, All right, we've got these pieces here, what do you think we need to do with this? And based on my experience thus far, I would guess. Interestingly, he really liked that because I didn't know what you shouldn't do. I didn't know what was wrong yet. He'd been doing it for so long. He knew in his head; this is the way you do this, and you do not do this. But because I didn't, I could say, well, what if we did this? And it would change his perspective a little bit? He was learning from me. Even though I had no idea what I was doing for the first, well, I would say probably still didn't know what I was doing. I was an apprentice effectively.

We all learn differently. We all learn through different methods, through different ways. The worst training, I received, I was given a manual. I was just given a book and had all the instructions of what to do. And I read everything and had no idea what I was doing. And I had to go to my manager and say, okay, I understand this in theory, but I need to see what it is you want me to do here. And so, they took me through, and they had someone he and I was able to shadow them. I was able to follow this other employee and see what they did. And everything that I had read clicked. It made sense. And I could do now. Not just think, but actually do. All of this brings me to this passage in the Gospel of John.

Gospel of John here. We've worked through this process of Jesus living life with his disciples, the disciples following him everywhere, to the point where He has to wake up early to get away from them, to go pray for a few minutes, because that's what disciples do. They follow their rabbi. That's what to be a disciple is to follow your rabbi because you don't want to miss a thing your rabbi does. So, by the time we get to John 14, we're at a very famous setting. This is the Last Supper just before this in John Chapter 13. Jesus has washed the disciples' feet. That's important. Just before this verse, Jesus predicts Peter's denial. That's important. Just after this passage where Jesus says, 'I

am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' in verse 15, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit, a counselor. This is important. See, we've got this context here of a conversation. The disciples don't know yet this is one of their last big teaching moments. One of the last moments to sit and really listen to Jesus talk before everything else happens and suddenly they're left on their own.

So, Jesus explains to them. Beginning in verse in chapter 14, verse 1, 'Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's home and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you so that you will always be with me, where I am, and you know where I am going and how to get there.' Okay, I'm listening. I can accept. And then Jesus drops that line, and you know where I am going and how to get there. And like me, in that third job I had, I was working at a library, I'm not a librarian, I don't have a degree in library science. But they have certain methods that you have to follow and and job structure. These guys have no idea what He means when He says, you know where I'm going and how to get there.

So, Thomas, raises his hand, I'm sure, and says, 'No, we don't, Lord. I know that He's probably told us so. We know how to get there. Okay, let me think, Thomas. Just like, nope, I'm gonna go ahead and out myself and say, I don't know. So, we haven't any idea where you are going, so how can we know the way? Jesus says, 'I am the way.' By saying this, Jesus' saying, you know where I'm going, you know how to get there because you know me. And this flies in the face of thousands of years of tradition. See, they're going to go on after Jesus ascends to Heaven and sends the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and suddenly the church is born, and the people are growing, and people are giving their lives to serve one another and follow the way of Jesus.

The term Christian didn't come around for a long time. The early church would not have called themselves Christians in any translation of that. They were followers of the way. Christianity as a faith was called 'the way.' And it all comes from this conversation. Thomas says, "how can we know the wa?" Jesus answered, "I am the way". So, you're getting this frame of reference here that is going to have a ripple on effect all the way to us being here this morning. But what I love, one of the things that I love so much about the Gospel of John are these 'I Am' statements. Seven times throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus says, 'I am- Something.' And this takes us all the way back to Exodus where Moses is in the wilderness with his sheep in Chapter 3, and He sees this bush burning away and God speaks to him through it and says, 'Moses, go to Egypt, tell Pharaoh, let my people go.' I'm sure you're familiar with the story. It's pretty famous, but it all comes down to this one part. In this chapter here, chapter 3, verse 13, Moses protested, If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, The God of your ancestors has sent me to you, they won't believe me. They will ask, Which God are you talking about? What's his name? Well then, what should I tell them? You must keep in mind Moses has been giving every excuse possible to not do what God has asked Him to do. And God just keeps coming up with no solution, solution, solution. And props to God for patience because I am like Moses, and I make lots of excuses when He wants me to do something uncomfortable. So just going to go ahead and freely admit that one.

So, God replies and for the first time that we have recorded Scripture shares a name. He said, God replied, this is verse 14 in chapter t3 of Exodus. "I am' who 'I am.' Just tell them 'I am' has sent you

not. I was not. I will be. I am." That is the name that God gives to Moses. And for Israel, this name became so Holy they wouldn't write it down. In the Hebrew, the name that we translate it into is Adonai. And for a rabbi, they will not even say that aloud. I follow a rabbi on TikTok. Social media. It's good times. Well, it can be. Mine is good times because it's all filled with, like, geologists and musicians and fun stuff like that. But this rabbi, all that he will say is Ado- and leave that space for us to fill in because he cannot say the name of God, it is so Holy. The name of God is Holy.

And so, here's Jesus all these years later with his disciples, He's just washed their feet. He's done all these miracles. He's done phenomenal things. And now He's washed their feet like a servant. And He tells them 'I am the way, the truth in the life.' Jesus is now grasping hands with ancient Hebrew tradition. And not only that, He is identifying Himself as the source. The truth of it, He says, 'I am the way the truth in life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' The way to the Father. I am the way. The way to the Father is through relationship with Jesus. Because the disciples know Jesus, they know the weight of the Father because they know Him. He is the way. I'm actually going to circle back around to that at the end.

Jesus is the truth. I never really thought about this too much. When Jesus says I'm the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. My mind automatically connects the way, and no one comes to the Father except through me. And just kind of truth and life. Sure. Jesus is the truth in life. What does that mean? Jesus is the truth. He is the truth of Scripture. He's the true manna. When the Israelites were wandering through the wilderness, God fed them and provided for them every day with a bread from heaven. This manna. Jesus is the true bread. John Chapter 6, verse 35 "I am the bread of life" There is another 'I am' statement. I love it. I love it so much. I am the bread of life. Jesus is the truth. All the sacrifice the law described all the sacrifices that we all would have to make in order to make ourselves right in God's sight. The Israelites had the books of law. Make this sacrifice. Make this sacrifice. If this has happened to make this sacrifice. If you can't afford that, you can still do a couple of these, but make these sacrifices in order to be made right with God. You had to give something up of yourself. You had to give your best. And it would show that you were dependent on God to provide for you. And yet all of those sacrifices that the Israelites, that Israel that the Jewish nation depended on for all those years, Jesus says, I am the true sacrifice. He's told them over and over what's going to happen, and they don't understand, or they don't believe Him. That's literally why Peter says we will never deny you, will never abandon you. And Jesus says, you're going to deny me three times. It's literally just before this.

Jesus is the truth. He's the true sacrifice. All of the Old Testament history was just a shadow of Jesus. Everything was pointing forwards to Jesus. He is the way. He is the truth, and He is the life. In Romans chapter 6, verse 11, it says 'In the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus is life. Jesus is the life.

We all know John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in Him will not die but have eternal life." Life is in Christ. Take it back to another of Jesus' 'I am' statements. I am the vine, and you are the branches. When we are connected to the vine, we're alive. That is where our life is. Life is in connection, in relationship with Jesus. He's the source of everything that we need. The way, the truth. And the life.

Circling back around to 'the way' statement, no one comes to the Father except through me. One of the things with the Old Testament law was the buildup of the Tabernacle. God gave Moses very clear instructions on how to build the Tabernacle a mobile temple. Using thousands of yards of fabric and wooden posts that could be taken down and moved. The nation of Israel, these children of Israel wandering through the wilderness, they have very clear instructions on how to measure and mark out an outer courtyard and then an inner courtyard and then an inner courtyard to that called the Holy place. And then an inner courtyard to that called the Holy of Holies, a structured way and God would descend his presence down into the Holy of Holies and dwell among His people. Not just out and above, but God was with his people. That's what the word tabernacle means 'to live with'. 'To dwell among' God would tabernacle with his people- go camping. It's a nice, easy way to explain it to kids. God would set up his tent right in the middle of everyone else's tents. God camped right in the middle. He would live among. But there were always those barriers. You had the outer courtyard, the inner courtyard. You had that Holy courtyard, and then the Holy of holies. And only priests could enter the Holy courtyards. And only the high priest once a year could enter the Holy of Holies. By the time the temple was built here, Solomon built his temple, which was destroyed. And then Herod rebuilt the temple again for Jerusalem by the time Jesus around. So, they've got this grand temple, and it's laid out exactly the same outer courtyard. Same measurements. Inner courtyard. Same measurements. Inner Holy courtyard. Where only the priests can go. It's just the same. Except it's built with stone. And they still had the Holy of holies. And what I love about this in the Holy of Holies, it was blocked by a curtain, a really big curtain of thick fabric, one giant piece of fabric strung up across the top. And you think, what kind of rings or things did? What kind of crossbar did they use if it was going to be such a big, thick, heavy piece of fabric? But this was so Holy. The high priest couldn't enter into the Holy of holies without going through many purification ceremonies to make Himself right and be able to stand in the presence of God. He had to fast. He had to abstain from a whole bunch of things. He had to wash a bunch of times. He had to wash his clothes a bunch of time. It was a whole thing. Not only that, if he had made one mistake in that process, the holiness of God would destroy him. So, he would wear a special apron that had bells on it, and he'd have a rope tied to his ankle so that when he went into the Holy of Holies, if he had not obey the Law of God and died, they would be able to hear there's no jingling bells. And they'd be able to pull them out with the rope without having to send someone else in after him. It's intense. It's intense because it's camping. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Thank you. I didn't. I didn't write that one down. That just occurred to me. This is a pretty serious thing. But when Jesus dies on the cross, the curtain is torn open from top to bottom, not from bottom to top. God split the curtain because Jesus was the true sacrifice and he died. And he, for once and for all, paid for everything. And now the sin that would kill us if we entered the presence of God has been washed away. And we have access to the Holy of Holies. We have access. We can stand before God, the Father, without fear. Because Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. No one has access to the Father now except because of Him. We owe everything to Christ. Obviously, we owe everything to God. But we're faced with a challenge here. Jesus says. I am the way in the truth, in the life. After, Thomas says. How can we know the way? How can we know the way? Jesus says I am the way. We know the way to God because we know Jesus.

This isn't about thousands of years of law. This is about relationship. It's all about relationship. If I go to McDonald's. Okay. Some people would say that's a mistake in general. Others would say, let's go for lunch. I go stand at McDonald's. I'm not a French fry. Standing at McDonald's does not make

me a French fry. If I go to get an oil change and I'm standing there to pay for the oil change, standing in that garage, that mechanic's garage does not make me a car. Certainly, doesn't make me a mechanic. Sitting in one of these pews doesn't make us a follower of the way. Opening our Bible, reading a few verses and doing a mental check-I've read my Bible verse for today. When we do that, we're turning relationship back into religion. Religion in and of itself is not bad. Religion is a system of rules and expectations to help someone better serve their faith. But if it's no longer faith and it's just religion, all the laws, all the traditions and no relationship, do you know Jesus? It's a weird thing to ask on a Sunday morning in church, but do you know Jesus? Because he's the way. He's the truth in the life. If we know Jesus, we know the way to the father. No one else can get there except through Jesus. And that upsets a lot of people. A lot of people don't want to believe this verse right here. No one comes to the Father except through me. That's not popular these days. I don't have any words of comfort on that. It's just not popular. People don't want to believe this. But we have to wrestle with this question. Do we know Jesus?

My challenge for you this week, open up one of the Gospels. If you want something really logical and full of facts, go for the Gospel of Luke. If you want something dynamic and fast, go for the Gospel of Mark. If you want something winding and full of wisdom, go for the Gospel of Matthew. If you want something heartfelt and relational, go for the Gospel of John. But take some time to get to know Jesus better. You may have read all four Gospels hundreds of times. Read them again. Pick a gospel and read it again with the question in your mind, Do I know this Jesus? What is He like? If you read the Gospel of John and then turned around and someone said, Okay, based on everything you've read in the Gospel of John, tell me about Jesus. Don't try and, you know, proselytize and get me saved. Just tell me about this Jesus fellow that you just read about.

We watch movies and remember the synopsis afterwards. We read books and can tell someone about it. What about this Jesus fellow? Do you know Him? Do I know Him? Back when I was a teenager and I was working my jobs at A&W and working for the blacksmith and then the library I discovered, I have a very specific way of learning, and that's to watch, to observe. If you just tell me and I have to listen, I'm not going to learn much. If I can watch you do it, I think I might be able to do it. We're watching Jesus. And he tells us, Hey, guys, I think you can do it, too. Everything that I'm doing, you can do this. How's that for encouraging? The Son of God believes in us. He believes we can do it. He believes that we can do what he did. He only spent three years on this earth training 12 guys and a handful of followers. And he said, I think you can do it. And they did. And all these years later, here we are, and we can do it, too. We can change lives. We can bring healing to the world around us if we know Jesus. If we're following our teacher and doing things the way that he did. Be encouraged. When we know Jesus, we know the way, we know the truth. we know the life. And he believes that we can do it, too.

Pray with me. Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your word. Lord, scripture; it changes our hearts. It changes the way we think. It changes our view of the world and our view of you. Lord, take us out into this week. Help us to know you better. Help us to know Jesus better. And that we begin to live the way that Jesus lived, that we live in the truth that Jesus gave us, that we live in the life that Jesus gives us. We thank you and we praise you Lord, in your name, Amen.