

John 14:4-6

Sermon notes JRO

“You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:4-6

A Farewell Meditation

Rhetorical teaching tool

- I. I Am the only Way
- II. The character and person of Thomas
- III. The Way, the Truth and the Life

I. I am the Way. No one comes to the father except through me.

Way = *hodos* (odoV, 3598) = natural path, road, goat path, traveler’s way, journey, course of conduct.

“I am the True and Living Way.” (James Moffat translation)

Oneness with the Father (John 6:44)

One of many “I Am” statements in the gospel of John

Early Christians were called “followers of the Way.” The people of the Dead Sea Scrolls called themselves “the Way.” Members were known as those who “have chosen the Way.”

The Exclusivity of the Gospel

There is only one way to God. God chose the way. He made the way. He is the way. “No one comes to the Father except through me.” These words seem jarring to many. Whatever a humanist, atheist, agnostic or pluralist thinks about Jesus, it’s hard to get around this claim. There is no other way to God but by faith in Jesus. Elijah, Buddha, the Dalai Lama, Confucius, Aristotle, Ellen G. White, Mohammed, Ibn Al-Hazen were lovely people with wise thoughts. But none of them ever made the claims that Yeshua did. They never had so much evidence piled up for the miracle of a resurrection, and they never claimed to be one with God.

Liar, Lunatic or Lord (C.S. Lewis)

Bono on Jesus

II. The Character and Person of Thomas

Thomas = Ta’oma (תאומא) = didymus (didumoV) = twin.

Mt 10:3 Sent out with Matthew the tax collector. Yeshua instructs them on ministry at length.

Jn 20:24-28 “Unless I put my hands in His wounds, I will not believe.”

Jn 21:2 Seven go out to fish, the resurrected Yeshua calls from the shore to cast their nets again.

Acts 1:13 In the upper room when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas.

A. It’s unlikely that this was his given name. It may have been Judas. The gnostic scroll “Book of Thomas the Contender” claims a passage as “the secret words of the savior to Judas Thomas” including the

statement: “Since it has been said that you are my twin and true companion, examine yourself and learn who you are.” It has been suggested based on this that Thomas resembled Yeshua in looks. (gnosis.org)

- Thomas looked like Yeshua
- Mary of Bethany Smelled like Yeshua
- Peter had the weight of leadership like Yeshua

They all dealt with Yeshua’s death differently between His death and resurrection.

B. John 20:24-28

Thomas was absent when Yeshua previously appeared to the disciples and the apostles.

Perhaps Thomas was distancing himself from the movement out of doubt, hurt or embarrassment after Yeshua’s death. He might have struggled with feeling duped or “missing it.” Maybe he wondered if any of it was really real after all. Was Yeshua who he said he was? What do I do now? Walk away? Go back to life as normal?

Have you ever had a season like that?

I did: 1991

“To whom shall we go? You have the words of life.” (John 6:68)

C. But John uses Thomas’ words to point to our need for the wounded messiah.

Robert H. Smith believes Thomas is underestimated by most and that “John uses the story of Thomas to declare that a Jesus without wounds, a Jesus without the Cross, is not adequate to address the deepest needs of humankind.” We could never get back to the God with a sterile, wound-free messiah. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that we have a high priest able to sympathize with our weakness so that we can receive mercy and grace. (Heb 4:14-16) Not that we will all suffer like Yeshua. As D.A. Carson puts it: [Yeshua would say:] “My path takes in Gethsemane, the Cross, And stark rejection draped in agony. My way to God embraces utmost loss: Your way to God is not my way, but me.” He suffered much so that we may obtain mercy and grace and oneness with God during our small suffering.

III. The Way the Truth and the Life

Brings us back to “The Way, the Truth and the Life.”

Truth = *aletheia* (aleqeia, 225) = the unconcealed, manifest, veritable essence of a matter

Life = *zoe* (zwh, 2222) = of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it. As in “zoology.”

The way of truth and life has been revealed and manifest in Yeshua.

He is the veritable essence of God – unconcealed!

Yeshua’s path to bring us life meant pain and agony. Most of the apostles suffered martyrdom and perhaps even some of us will suffer greatly in this life. However, this story doesn’t end in death! His way is through truth and brings life. Life here and life in eternity.

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Appendix A: More Perspectives on “The Way.”

Cissie Reynolds: When Jesus says that He is the Way, he means that the way to get to the Father is through death, and Jesus was about to show that death would be conquered. This means we don't have to fear death. Jesus showed us the way to do it. Death is only a channel to go through to get to God. I grieve that He had to suffer, but maybe back in the day no one would have noticed otherwise. He makes me want to be brave enough to deserve the trip when it's my time. Truly, death is the only thing that doesn't scare me. Not like needles or ebola. I'd like to thank Him in person and apologize for stupidities. With wars, mass shootings, drive-bys, etc., He must be extremely busy.

Peder Olsen: “I am the Life.” I need life to be His disciple (or apprentice). I don't want to be like the Jewish leaders of Yeshua's time whom he criticized by saying, “The scriptures testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:40)

Steve Hanes: You need all three for relationship with the Father. If you only have 1 (Way, Truth, Life) you don't have any of it.

Les Cowger: Yeshua's way was marked with hardship, trial and pain. I think of a Journey. The way is the trajectory, Truth is what you do and learn on the way and Life is the enjoyment of the Journey.

Brad Strong: Truth = Torah. He is the truth, the true way. The way (the Journey) is part of the destination.

Åsa Strong: This verse was so meaningful to me as a newly born-again believer. I used to preach this with joy in Stockholm because I was so excited that I finally found Life!

Martina Frazier: Salvation is a Person. He is always with us – not just when we're doing devotions. Invite Yeshua into every aspect of your day.

Raymond Frazier: The wounded one calls you to “Take up your cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

“Come to me all who are Weary” follows declarations about how the Father has entrusted all things to the Son and that the Father is glorified in the Son. (Matt 11:25-30)

Appendix B: Notes from *Wounded Lord: Reading John Through the Eyes of Thomas* by Robert H. Smith

It is the longstanding habit of many commentators and pastors to render Thomas as the most obtuse disciple. Not to mention his reputation as “doubting Thomas.” But Thomas is not the special-needs disciple full of doubt. When, in John 20, he proclaimed “Unless I put my hands in the wounds of Yeshua, I will not believe,” he is presented not as a person of stubborn doubt, but as a model of deep discernment. Here, John uses the story of Thomas to declare that a Jesus without wounds, a Jesus without the Cross, is not adequate to address the deepest needs of humankind. (Chapter 1)

“Human life is a swift voyage, a fleeting passage between birth and death. For too many people, life is a mindless migration, a series of wrong turns, a wandering in circles, a groping in the dark, a trudging on a treadmill. Jesus calls out to all us travelers, inviting us to take stock of our paths, our ways, our journeying. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus summons would-be disciples to “take up their cross and follow him (Mark 8:34; Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23.) In pointing to Jesus as “the way,” John is offering his own variation on that powerful and puzzling synoptic theme.” (p. 315 via Hoopla) Jesus coaxes us up onto his way or path, as he elsewhere called Peter out onto the water, beckoning him forward. And it all looked very threatening to Peter, and Jesus called words of encouragement to him and the others: “Do not fear!” – just as he encouraged the disciples in John 14 to “not let your hearts be troubled.” (Chapter on John 14)