

Easter 5 John 14: 1-14 I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE – Rev Carol Harley

Many years ago, I went to stay with Jamie, my son, and Kath, my daughter-in-law, for a few days. Because I was travelling by train Jamie gave me detailed instructions of where he and I were to meet up once I had got off the train at Euston. I was to go to the nearby tube station get on the Jubilee line to Canary Wharf and once I got off the tube I knew my way easily. However despite Jamie's instructions I got lost and had to ask the way. When you have to ask someone the way the assumption is that you have to go somewhere once you have been given the instructions. In my own case I just had to go down one road and then turn left – from there I could see Canary Wharf. When I asked my question, 'Can you tell me the way to Canary Wharf?' I assumed that I would have to walk somewhere.

When we ask the question 'How do I get to God?' we find we are right there when we look at Jesus. We don't have to go any further. We are there. It's a bit like a foreign tourist asking where Big Ben is when he or she is standing right under it. There is no journey to make you are there. When we look at Jesus we don't have to go any further. When Jesus says, 'I AM THE WAY', we're there. The way to God is through a relationship with Jesus Christ. It's through Jesus that we get to the Father.

I am sure that you will all be familiar with children's puzzles which give three or four different routes, but only one of which leads to the treasure. Over the years people have suggested that there are various ways of getting to God. Some have suggested that by doing good we get to God. Others have suggested that the way to God is through religious rituals. Some people would suggest that if we really want to find God we should go away from people and find him in solitude. Others suggest that we will find God through meditation whilst others suggest that we will find God through our 'inner self'. All of these may get us close to God and they might help us in our relationship with him once we have met him. But in the first instance Jesus is the way to God. Other routes may lead us 'up the mountain', but only by going to and through Jesus do we get to the top. We only meet the Father through the Son.

So why is it that only Jesus is the way to God? To answer this we might do a bit of theology!! The book of Hebrews describes Jesus as our high priest. Looking at the idea of the Jewish high priest can help us to see why Jesus is the way. The Old Testament high priest represented the Jewish people before God, as their representative he gained forgiveness for them. And on one day each year he went into the holy of holies where he entered God's special presence. Again, he did this on behalf of the Jewish nation. When he carried out his priestly work he wore a breastplate which had on it twelve precious stones. Each of the stones represented one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Wearing the breastplate symbolised one of the tribes of Israel. Wearing the breastplate symbolised how when he went into the presence of God he went on behalf of the Jewish people. He represented the people before God and gained forgiveness on their behalf.

When Jesus came, the book of Hebrews tells us that in a similar way he represented all of us. By dying and rising from the dead he gained forgiveness for us. And by going into the Father's presence he gained for us the possibility of a relationship with the Father.

When Jesus gains forgiveness, when he conquers death, when he goes into the presence of the Father we all do. He did these things on our behalf. That is why JESUS IS THE WAY. He is the way because only he can act as our high priest.

We all know about scientific discoveries. We know that at one time people thought that the earth was flat then it was discovered that it was round. At one time people thought that the earth was at the centre of the universe, then scientists discovered that the sun was at the centre. There have been various theories about how the universe will end. We have had the idea that the universe would, after expanding, contract and fall in on itself. Then we had the pulsating universe theory which suggested that after the big crunch there would be a big bang and so on.

We know that God created the universe. He knows everything about the universe because he created it in the first place. He knows what scientists have still to discover. So in a very real sense HE IS THE TRUTH. He is the origin of and the meaning of the universe. God is the truth. As the Son of God JESUS IS THE TRUTH.

Jesus said that HE IS THE LIFE. Because he is God himself (the truth), because he is our high priest (the way) he is also the life. Real life is a life lived in Jesus. A real life, a life that is lived at one with God, is one where we know that we are forgiven. It is one in which we can have a relationship with God – in which we can know him as our Father. It is one in which we can know him as our Father. It is one in which we can worship God – the creator of the universe and one in which we can know a purpose in life. It is one which at the end we will go forward to live an eternal life in God's presence. It is because of in and through Jesus that we can have a real life as God wants us to live it. Jesus therefore is the life.

Jesus is part of God himself and because of this he is the truth. He mirrors and reflects what life in the universe is all about. Jesus is the way because as our high priest he takes us into the presence of the Father. Jesus is the life because it is only in and through him that we can live a life in which we can have a relationship with our heavenly Father – the creator of the universe and the origin of real love.

Amen