

Can Satan give us life? No. To give life is not in his nature. Can anyone else give life? No. Life comes from God. To live in Jesus is to live in the closest, most perfect relationship with the Source of all life.

And that is what we are created and invited to do.

Beloved, the Gospel message is not for the faint-hearted. It is not for those who want an easy life or even an easy way to understand God. The Gospel life demands our *all*, just as Jesus gave His *all* for our sake. That's why it is so important that we try to understand it, to believe it and to share it with others.

Come to Jesus; remain with Jesus; be faithful to Jesus; love Jesus; introduce your friends and family to Jesus; and everything He promised will be yours: the forgiveness of all your sins, the peace that passes all understanding, and eternal life in His nearer Presence in Heaven.

Χάρις τῷ θεῷ, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Ἀμήν

LECTIONS: Acts 7.55-60; Psalm 31.1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 22.2-10; John 14.1-14

ⁱ Coniaris, Anthony M. *No Man Ever Spoke As This Man*. 1969, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Light and Life Publishing.

EASTER 5a

2014-05-18

PARISH OF GEORGINA—S. JAMES CHURCH, SUTTON

I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life, says the Lord. *No one comes to the Father except through me.* Of all the assertions ever made by Jesus, I suspect this one—that no one comes to the Father except through Him—is the most problematical to modern sensibilities. We live in an egalitarian age and in an open-minded, politically-correct country in which the views and opinions of all people are to be respected. But if that is so, how can we come to terms with a statement that is so exclusive? If we accept these words of Jesus, then aren't we saying that we alone have the truth, and that all other religious systems are flawed?

These are intentionally tough questions, yet if we are to have any comfort from our faith in this life, and any hope for the next, then we need to be absolutely certain of what it is that we believe. If, as Jesus says, there is no other way to the Father except through Him, then how do we answer family, friends or acquaintances when they question or ridicule what we believe?

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus made a number of claims about Himself. These are recorded in the Gospel of John, as the "I AM" statements. We have three of them in our reading this morning: I AM the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. To understand what these statements mean, we need first to go back to the Old Testament, to the third chapter of Exodus. When God called out to Moses from within the burning bush, and told him to go to Pharaoh and to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, Moses was understandably sceptical. "Who shall I say is sending me?" he asked. "What is your name?" And God replied, "YHWH" which is translated variously as "The God Who Is" or "I AM Who I AM". [Ex 3:14] This was to be the beginning of a special relationship with the God Who IS. It might interest you to consider that this

form of God's Name is echoed in the opening words of the Lord's Prayer: *Our Father WHO ART in Heaven*. The emphasis is not that God is in Heaven, but rather, that the God Who IS—YHWH—is in Heaven. It's important to remember that whenever we use the Lord's Prayer, we are *not* praying to Baal, or Anubis, or to anyone else: rather we are praying to The God Who IS, the God and Father of us all.

The "I AM" statements of Jesus hearken back to the Divine Name. Jesus is the living Son of the living God. Whenever He said "I AM", followed by the definite article "the", He was invoking God's Name to state something absolute about Himself. *The way, the life, the truth*—these are all qualities of the God Who IS. *The truth* means that there is no other truth. *The life* means there is no other life. *The way* means there is no other way. This is because these are all qualities of the God Who IS, and the God Who IS, is perfectly consistent and unchanging, as is His Son, Jesus the Christ. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us of this: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.* [Heb 13.8]

That's heavy theology, isn't it? And yet we know it to be true. Jesus taught His disciples that He and the Father are one [Jn 10.30] and He prayed that His followers would be one, even as He and the Father are one. [Jn 17.22] So whatever the Father's qualities might be, those are revealed in the Son. By making absolute statements about Himself, Jesus is telling us something about God the Father, Who sent Him to be among us.

So how does this affect our understanding?

First, that Jesus *is God*. *I AM the way and the truth and the life*, He says. *I AM*—YHWH.

Second, that God is *absolute*. He is *the* God Who IS. If ever

there were other so-called gods, they either died out as belief in them died out, or else they have been relegated to some sort of old gods' home. YHWH, the God Who IS, is Lord of lords and God of gods. All else are subservient to Him. He is *the* God. And Jesus is His Son, *the* only-begotten. No one else can lay claim to that relationship or to that divinity. And because of this, Jesus can say, as He did, that no one can come to the Father except through Him.

Again, what does this mean to us, or to the world?

First, that there is absolutely no other path, direction or method by which humanity can approach God. Jesus is the One—the *only* One—appointed for that purpose. He is *the* Way. There is no other. One modern writer¹ says this about Jesus: He is the Way, the Way life works, the Way of God's coming to us, the Way of our going to God, the Way out of sin, the Way to peace, the Way out of confusion, the Way to truth, the Way to suffer *and* the Way to pray. Jesus is all these things. He is the complete package. Because He is God, He is therefore the Way to God.

Jesus is *the* Truth—but what *is* truth? There are two types of truth: *absolute* truth which cannot be diminished or qualified in any way; and *relative* truth, which can change with the passage of time, fashion or political need. When Jesus calls Himself *the* Truth, He is speaking in terms of the absolute: the truth that never changes, the truth upon which we may place complete and total trust. There is nothing relative about Jesus. What He accomplished from the Cross and by His resurrection—total victory over sin and death—are signs that He *is* the Truth.

Jesus is *the* Life. *Why?* Because He came that we might have life and have it abundantly. [Jn 10.10] Because He Who was dead now lives. (That's the Easter message.) Because He has promised life in His nearer Presence to all who believe on Him.