Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Religion has been in the news quite a lot lately. The shootings in Christchurch and the bombings in Sri-Lanka and the comments of Israel Folau mean that pretty much everyone is talking about Christianity and Islam and Buddhism, etc. And you will have noticed that a common thought in these discussions is that religion is fine so long as you keep it to yourself. What our society does not like is when you claim that your religion is the only true religion and that *everyone* is subject to the claims of your religion. That really gets up a lot of people’s noses! There seems to be a very commonly held opinion, even among many who claim to be Christians, that Christianity is just one valid religion among many; that religious people all worship the same God, they just know Him by different names. And Jesus? He was just a kind teacher who wanted us to be non-judgmental and to love everybody.

Well, the people who teach that sort of thing about Jesus either have not read the Bible or they pick and choose which parts of it they like. And I say this because it will not take you long, if you read Jesus’ *own* words, to see that He was very judgmental and exclusive in terms of His claims about Himself. And we have a striking and plain example of that with the words of v6. And I want us to spend most of our time this morning in v6. So what I will do is begin with some summary comments about the context of this passage and vv4-11 as a whole, and then we will spend the bulk of our time unpacking v6. And we do this to see that **Jesus is the only way to heaven**. That is our theme this morning – Jesus is the only way to heaven.

So let’s begin with the **context**.

* + 1. In this part of John’s Gospel, Jesus is preparing His disciples for life without Him.
       1. Think about it. Up till now, following Jesus has been pretty easy – you just walked behind Him, literally! You listened when He talked and you applauded when He healed. If you had a question, you asked Him and He answered. And the disciples really liked this! They enjoyed following Him around as the Messiah.
       2. But all this was about to change, dramatically, with His approaching death and resurrection and ascension to heaven. Very soon, He would not be with them as He had been up till now.
       3. Have you ever had a close friend or a really good teacher or coach move to another city? It changes everything, doesn’t it. You can email or Skype them but it just isn’t the same as when they were right there with you.
       4. Well, the disciples were going to face a massive adjustment like this when Jesus left them. Jesus will soon explain that His going to heaven will actually be for the good of the disciples, but He knew that His leaving would be massively difficult for them at first, so He was trying to prepare them for it.
    2. And He did this by explaining that **their relationship with Him would now need to one of faith**. We saw that in 14:1 where He said, “*Believe in God; believe also in Me*.” They would now have to relate to Jesus in the same way that they related to the Father, whom they had never seen.
       1. And you and I are in the exact same position now. We have never seen Jesus. We can’t talk to Him, face to face. We can’t bring people to Jesus so that they can talk to Him. Our relationship with Jesus is all about faith.
    3. But Jesus also wanted the disciples to know that **one day they would be with Him again, *physically***. And He spoke of this in vv2-3 as He promised them that He was going to prepare a place for them in heaven and that one day He would bring them to be with Him in heaven. So the disciples needed to live with a heavenly perspective; they had to live each day serving King Jesus and knowing that one day they would be with Him in heaven.
       1. And again, it is the same for you and me. The best life on earth is the life lived in service to King Jesus, knowing that one day we will be with Him in heaven.

Well, that brings us to **vv4-11**. And again, I want to try and summarize the main point that Jesus is making here as briefly as possible.

* + 1. vv4-11 are built around the statements from two of His disciples;
       1. **The first is in v5 and it was made by Thomas**. Jesus had just said to the disciples, “*And you know the way to where I am going*.” And we can sense the frustration in Thomas’s voice as He responds with, “*Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way*?”
       2. We will look closely at how Jesus responded in v6 in a couple of minutes, but His main point is that His going is about connecting humanity with His Father in heaven! He talks about *coming* to the Father and *knowing* the Father and *seeing* the Father. And this leads **Philip to make the second statement**; he says, “*Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us*.”
    2. So Thomas wanted GPS co-ordinates to where Jesus was going so that he and the other disciples could enter them into Google Maps and get directions to that place – Samaria? Rome? Spain? Is that where you are going, Jesus? But Philip wanted to *see* the Father; he wanted to be like Moses who saw the burning Bush or the Israelites who saw the pillar of fire. But what their statements reveal is that they still didn’t realize who was standing in front of them; they still did not understand who Jesus is and what He had came to do! They should have known from the words and miracles of Jesus. That is what Jesus repeatedly hammers home in vv7-11. But He also knew that it would take His death and resurrection and ascension for them to understand that He came to be their *Saviour*! What the disciples needed and what we need is not to have Jesus physically next to us or to see a vision of God. What we need is eternal life. And eternal life can only be found in a relationship with God. And such a relationship is only possible by *faith* in Jesus! So again, Jesus is the only way to heaven.

And this is what Jesus powerfully spells out in v6. For as He describes Himself as “*the way, the truth, and the life*,” He is presenting Himself as the only solution to our need for three things – **reconciliation**, **illumination**, and **ressurection**. They are our three points for the rest of the sermon. Let me explain:

1. First of all, as Jesus describes Himself as the **way**, He is presenting Himself as the only solution to our need for **reconciliation**.
   1. Reconciliation is when people who were apart are brought together again. Sometimes things can go bad in relationships, for one reason or another, so people separate from each other. But if the matter is resolved and they come back together again that is reconciliation.
   2. And by speaking about Himself as the *way*, Jesus is revealing mankind’s need to be reconciled to God. And this is why we read **Genesis 3** earlier. For the three problems we are going to talk about here all have their origin in the Fall in the Garden of Eden.
      1. Boys and girls, when **Adam and Eve** were created, were they good or evil? They were “very good.” And when we read from Genesis 3 earlier, we read that A&E “*heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden*.” So we can infer from those words that A&E enjoyed regular, fellowship with God. Because they were good, they met with God and talked with God and enjoyed being with Him.
      2. But what were A&E doing when they heard God walking in the garden? They were hiding. And why were they hiding? Because they had disobeyed God’s command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
      3. So now, instead of there being fellowship between God and man, there was *separation*; instead of God and man being friends, they were *enemies*; instead of there being goodwill between God and man, there was *hostility*. And these are all words used to describe our natural relationship with God in the Bible. Every human being is connected to the sin and guilt of A&E. So as sinful, unconverted human beings, we are God’s *enemies*, we are *hostile* to God, and we are *separated* from God.
   3. But what does Jesus say here in v6? “**I am the *way* … to the Father**.” And what He is saying is that He can bring us back to fellowship with the Father. As hostile enemies, we cannot fix our problem. But He can! He is the way. And He is the way because on the cross He took our sin and guilt and paid for it. He endured the punishment that our sin deserved. And this made it possible for us to receive His goodness; His righteousness. And we receive His goodness by believing that what He did on the cross, He did for me, for you. So having been made good, we are once again able to enjoy fellowship with Father.
   4. In **1 John 1:3**, John says that the reason he and the other disciples proclaimed the gospel was so that their hearers might “*have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*.” Jesus is the way back into fellowship with God. That is why **Romans 5:11**, which we read earlier, says, “*We … rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation*.”
   5. My friends,it has been said by many others that we begin life with a God-shaped hole in our hearts. Have you heard that expression before?
      1. If you saw a news story tonight about the discovery of some previously unknown tribe in South America or Asia or Africa, what is the one thing you can be sure they will do? Worship a god or gods. It is in us all to worship God.
      2. When the Apostle Paul was preaching in Athens, He said, God created “*mankind to live on the face of the earth … that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward Him and find Him*.” God wants us to know Him and to come to Him and to see Him. And the way to know Him and come to Him and to see Him is? Jesus. The only way to fellowship with God is faith in Jesus.
      3. The problem for many people, however, is that they do not know about Jesus or they reject Jesus. And that is why there are so many religions in the world.
   6. Do you enjoy fellowship with the true God? If so, then know that one day it will be face to face fellowship. That is what Jesus promises us here. And that is good reason to pray, Come quickly, Lord Jesus! But if you do not yet enjoy fellowship with God, you need to know that your only hope is to believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, because He alone is the *way* to God.
2. But reconciliation with God presupposes another problem that sinful humanity has. So the second problem that Jesus presents Himself as the only solution for is our need for **illumination**. And He does this by describing Himself as the ***Truth***.
   1. Let’s go back again to the Garden of Eden. Before the Fall, A&E knew the truth about God and creation and themselves. They knew that God was their Creator and that He was holy and gracious, and that they enjoyed fellowship with Him. They knew that their calling was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over all of creation. So A&E had correct knowledge about God and creation and themselves. But that was ruined by the Fall.
      1. **Ephesians 4:18** describes the condition of fallen mankind in this way: “*They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart*.”
      2. **Romans 1:18-21** explains that God has plainly revealed Himself in creation, but mankind suppresses the truth about God. And what that means is we know that God is there but we pretend He is not because we don’t want to submit to His rule. We want to do what *we* want. And so, Romans 1 says that sinful humanity has become futile in its thinking and our “*foolish hearts were darkened*.”
      3. When we were looking at reconciliation, I said that we need to know several things: Who God is, who Jesus is and what He came to do, that we are sinners, and that we may receive eternal life and enter into fellowship only by believing that what Jesus did on the cross He did for me. And these things can only be known from the Bible. But just reading them in the Bible is not enough. And that is because, as we have just seen, our “*foolish hearts are darkened*.” So how do you get rid of darkness? You switch on the light! This is called **illumination**. When you switch on a light in a dark room, you are illuminating the room. And in the same way, what ignorant, foolish, darkened hearts need is *spiritual* illumination. And how has John repeatedly described Jesus in His Gospel? As the light of the world! What did Jesus say about Himself in ch.8:1? He said, “*I am the light of the world*. *Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*.” It is by Jesus that ignorant, foolish, and darkened hearts of sinners are illuminated so that we come to the correct knowledge about God, about ourselves, and about salvation. And He does this, if you look down at v17, by giving us the “*Spirit of truth*.” It is the Holy Spirit who switches on the light of truth and understanding in our hearts. And He does this through the preaching of the Gospel.
      4. So when Jesus says, “*I am the … truth,*” He is saying that He is the only way to correct knowledge about God, about self, about creation, and about salvation. Study the Koran or the ‘scriptures’ of other religions, follow the prophets or gurus of other religions, and you will not come to know God and salvation. Jesus is the truth. And Jesus reveals Himself in this book (the Bible). So if you are here today and all this is new to you, get a Bible and start by reading John’s Gospel. And if you don’t have a Bible, come and talk to me afterwards and I will get you one.
3. Well, the third and las t problem that Jesus presents Himself as the only solution for is our need for **resurrection**. And He does this by describing Himself as the *Life*.”
   1. Again, let’s go back to the Garden of Eden. What else did A&E enjoy there before the Fall? Life. They lived in a world where there was no death.
      1. Do you boys and girls remember the story of **Enoch**? We read about Enoch in Genesis 5. We are told that Enoch “*walked with God*.” It is the same language used to describe how Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden. The point is that Enoch was a very godly man. And the end of Enoch’s life is described like this in Genesis 5:24, “*Enoch walked with God, and he was not for God took him away*.” It appears then that Enoch did not die; he simply went from life here to eternal life in heaven. Another example of this is **Elijah**. And I am sure you boys and girls remember how the end of Elijah’s life is described? We are told that “*chariots of fire and horses of fire separated [Elijah and Elisha]. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven*.” Elijah also did not die; he simply went from life here to eternal life in heaven. So we can infer from Enoch and Elijah that this is how it would have been for Adam and Eve if they had not sinned; they would have gone from life here to eternal life in heaven.
   2. But what did God say would happen to A&E if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? He said, “*In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die*.”And that is exactly what happened.Now A&E would one day die. And it is the same for all of us. **Romans 5:12** says, “*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned*.” We all know that one day we will die.
      1. At our homegroup on Wednesday we watched Ray Comfort’s new documentary called **The Fool**. It is freely available on YouTube. Just search for Ray Comfort The Fool. Ray Comfort is an evangelist. He preaches on street corners. He tells people that one day they will face God on Judgment Day and he explains that faith in Jesus is their only hope for heaven. Well, a man named Jurgen was often present when Ray shared the gospel and one day Ray had a one to one conversation with Jurgen. He challenged him to think about heaven and hell and Jesus, but Jurgen couldn’t really be bothered with it all. So Ray asked him how long he thought he might still live and Jurgen, who was 69 at the time, said about another 20 years. So Ray reminded him that none of us really know how long we have to live so hopefully Jurgen would think about these things before it was too late. And the next thing we saw on the movie was a newspaper with a headline, 69 year old man hit by car and killed while cycling home. And the man was Jurgen. He did not get his 20 years.
      2. You might be 8 years old, 18 years old, 38 years old, or 80 years old, but death is coming and you do not know when. And this is inescapable.
   3. What sinful, unconverted people need then is resurrection. It has two parts – the first part is what we just described as illumination; another way that the Bible speaks about illumination is as a **spiritual resurrection** – we are resurrected from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive. And all those that God gives *spiritual* resurrection to He will also *physically* resurrect to eternal life in heaven. So if we boil it all down, what sinful, unconverted people need is life. And what does Jesus say here? “*I am the … life*.”
      1. Do you remember what Jesus said to Martha about the resurrection? He said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live*.
      2. If you want to live in heaven after you have died, your only hope is Jesus. God will not welcome everyone into heaven. Heaven is not for all religious people. To enjoy eternal life in heaven you must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins.

At the start of the sermon I mentioned **Israel Folau**. If you don’t know who he is, he is an Australian rugby player who is in big trouble for saying on his Instagram page that unless drunks and liars and adulterers and fornicators and homosexuals and atheists repent and believe in Jesus, they will spend eternity in hell. And one of the awful things that many people have said in response to his post was that they can’t wait to be in hell because it sounds like that is where the party will be. My friend, I want you to think of the opposite of a party. What is the worst thing you have experienced in life? What disgusted and horrified and scared you, such that you never want to experience that ever again? Well, magnify that 10,000 times and that is all that there is in hell, all the time. It is a place of terror and sadness and fear and loneliness and pain and decay and a constant dying without ever dying, that will never end, and the worst thing will be knowing that you have no one to blame for your being there but yourself.

But you can be reconciled to God today. How? Jesus is the **way**! You can know the truth about God and yourself and salvation today? How? Jesus is the **truth**. And you can receive eternal life today. How? Jesus is the **life**!

You don’t have to pay an amount of money. You don’t first have to clean up your life. You just need to repent of your sins, which means to acknowledge that you have done wrong and commit yourself to do what is right, and believe that Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins; that He is your only hope of heaven. That’s it!

Have you done this already? I hope so. If not, please do it today. Amen.