

Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted with this background color

- I will introduce Stand and Greet after the Bucket Collection is complete.
- VBS Presentation
 - 8:30 AM - I will introduce Nancy or Valecia to speak about Vacation Bible School and whoever speaks will then introduce the video to be played.
 - 8:30 AM - I will introduce Nancy or Valecia to speak about Vacation Bible School and whoever speaks will then introduce the music videos to be played. There will be three songs and they will transition from one to the next automatically.
- Joys and Concerns
 - Please put up the picture of the church softball team when I talk about them

Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the basics of following Jesus.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because the basics are helpful for those who are hearing for the first time, being reminded of something you already knew and learning how to share with others.

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon is part of a three week series at the end of summer. It is the Sunday after Vacation Bible School. It is adapted from The Alpha Course Introduction: Is There More to Life Than This?

What are the next action steps?

The next action steps are to receive God's love and grow in your faith

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that God loves you.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - faith
- Sermon Books of the Bible
 - John
- Series
 - Following Jesus
- Speaker

7th Sunday after Pentecost
Following Jesus: I am Following
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text online at <http://j.mp/WVssGb>

July 27, 2014
John 14:1-11
Target Word Count: 2,345
Video online at [Insert Link Here]

- Andrew Conard
- Tags
 - faith, Alpha, talk, way, truth, life, bread, Jesus, God, testimony

Outline

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John 14:1-11, CEB

1 “Don’t be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. 2 My Father’s house has room to spare. If that weren’t the case, would I have told you that I’m going to prepare a place for you? 3 When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me so that where I am you will be too. 4 You know the way to the place I’m going.”

5 Thomas asked, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us.”

9 Jesus replied, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don’t speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Trust me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on account of the works themselves.”

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Sermon Starter Video

- Play sermon starter video, if available.

Introduction

Series Review

I was “Doc” this week at Vacation Bible School. This was one of the characters in the opening and closing skit each day. It was so much fun to see the children learn songs, stories and characteristics of God. God is creator, provider, protector, savior and king. It reminded me of the importance of some of the basics of our faith. During this three week series, we will examine some of the essentials of following Jesus.

The sermon today addresses some of the very basic questions about following Jesus. I hope you will listen for something new, to be reminded of something you already know or take notes on how to talk about your faith with a friend or family member who does not believe.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Opening Story - Personal Testimony

I have been a Christian all my life. My father is a United Methodist pastor and his father was a United Methodist pastor. I received a Bible from a United Methodist Church when I was in third grade and was confirmed as a member in a United Methodist Church.

One of the milestones in my life was when my faith became real to me. I was in high school. I was kneeling by the side of my bed reading the Bible and praying. I remember thinking about all the ways that I mess up, what's in my head, things I've said and done which I wish I could take back. I did not feel worthy of God's love.

At that moment, I realized that it didn't matter if I felt worthy. God knows all about my life and still loves me and offers forgiveness. I had known in my head that God loved the whole world and all of creation yet right then, I was overwhelmed with the truth that God's love and forgiveness - for me.

Experience at Pittsburg State University

I went to college at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, KS and, as you know, it can be a time in which you make new first impressions and change some of the pattern of your life or re-commit to those things that are important in your life.

During the first couple weeks of my freshman year, some of my friends from the floor on my dorm were going to over to a big house party and asked if I wanted to go with them. I was not really a party person in high school and I thought - Well, let me try this out.

We walked over from the dorms and it was, what I would guess to be, a pretty average

back to school college party. You may be able to imagine. I had not been there for long when I looked around and thought - what am I doing? This is pointless. If I choose this way of living, I knew that it would be empty - something would be missing.

Something is Missing - Prince Charles and Princess Diana

One of the most famous couples in recent history was Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Their fairytale wedding, divorce and Diana's tragic death captured the world's attention. Fascinating to me that one thing that Princes Charles and Princess Diana were agreed about was this: Prince Charles spoke of his belief that 'for all the advantages of science, there remains deep in the soul a persistent and unconscious anxiety that something is missing.'¹

And Princess Diana, speaking at a charity event, spoke of an 'overwhelming sense of loss and isolation that undermines many people's efforts to survive and cope with the complexities of modern life. They know,' she said, 'something is missing.'

Looking for the Next Thing

Sometimes we find ourselves always looking forward to the next thing in life rather than living for the present, in a sense.²

I played football in high school and when I was a freshman I remember thinking, 'I can't wait until I get to suit up in a varsity game - that is what it is all about. And the next year, I did suit up for varsity games, and it was great... for about three weeks. And then I thought, 'There must be more than this!'

And then I thought, 'Well, maybe when I earn a starting position - that is what it is all about. And with a lot of hard work, I did earn a starting position and it was great... for that season. And then I thought, 'There must be more than this!'

And then I thought, 'I have the chance to play after high school. When I play football at the college level - that is what it is all about.' And I did, practiced football at Pittsburg State University, one of the best Division II football programs in the country. After a year and a half of practice, I looked at my progress on the depth chart and I thought 'It is incredibly unlikely that I will ever have a starting position, 'There must be more than this!'

I quit playing football for the first time in years.

And I think for many people our life is like this and not just in sports. We are always searching for the next thing—and when we get there, we find it doesn't satisfy.³

¹ If you do not use these quotes, try to find a similar, effective quote from well-respected and well-known people in your region / context.

This quote will help emphasise that even the most unexpected people share this same feeling that something is missing.

² You may personalise this or use your own example depending on the personal story you choose. Try to lead on to making the same point that people often spend much of their lives searching or striving for the next goal for purpose and meaning, but find that, as an end in itself, it doesn't satisfy.

³ You may amend or omit text in red depending on how you link this in to the personal story.

I am the Bread of Life

And Jesus said: **I am the bread of life.** ‘I am the one person who can satisfy that kind of spiritual hunger that is in every human heart.’ So that other things, however good they may be—relationships, work, hobbies, whatever, sport—somehow they always leave us with this feeling that something’s missing.

Two Stomachs

One Japanese woman put it like this. She said, ‘In Japan they need to eat rice.’ She said, ‘It’s like we’ve got two stomachs: we’ve got one stomach for ordinary food and one stomach for rice. And however much ordinary food—meat, potatoes, fruit, vegetables—we eat, we don’t feel full. We don’t feel satisfied until we eat rice.’⁴

And I think if Jesus had been speaking to her, he’d have said: ‘I’m the rice of life. I’m the one person who can satisfy this “other stomach.”’⁵

Transition

Jesus said: **I am the bread of life,** ‘I am the one person who can satisfy that hunger.’ Now, why is that? Jesus said: **I’m the way and the truth and the life.** First of all, this: Jesus brings direction to a lost world. He said: **I am the way.**

I Am the Way

Au Pair - What are we doing on earth?

I heard the story of a family with young children who had hired an au pair girl. And this au pair girl was struggling to learn the English language, and she hadn’t quite mastered all the English idioms. And one time there was an argument going on between the children up in a room upstairs, and this au pair girl rushed upstairs to sort it out. And what she meant to say was, ‘What on earth are you doing?’ but what she actually said was, ‘What are you doing on earth?’ Now, the question she asked was a very good question: what are we doing on earth?⁶

Big Questions

Where do we come from? Where are we heading? Who are we? Does our life have any ultimate meaning and purpose? What happens when we die? These are the really big questions—they’re the first-order questions of life.

And I guess many people are on a kind of search. They’re trying to find some

⁴ KEY QUOTE

You may wish to adapt this to a local example that relates to the staple diet in your country

⁵ Delete this if you decide not to use the example above.

⁶ You may use this story by adapting the way it is introduced (text marked in red).

significance, some meaning, some purpose.’

Freddie Mercury

One of my favorite classic rock bands is Queen. I would listen to their songs before every football game in which I played.

Freddie Mercury, the lead singer in the rock group Queen, had amassed a huge fortune, attracted thousands, probably millions, of fans. But he admitted in an interview shortly before his death that he was desperately lonely. He said this:⁷

‘You can have everything in the world and still be the loneliest man. And that’s the most bitter type of loneliness. Success has brought me world idolisation and millions of pounds, but it’s prevented me from having the one thing we all need: a loving, ongoing relationship.’

Transition

And ultimately there is only one relationship that is completely loving and totally ongoing, and that is a relationship with God. And Jesus said: ‘I’m the way to that relationship. I’m the way to find the purpose for which we’re made.’

What Difference Does Jesus Make?

Sometimes people say, ‘Well, what difference does that make in your life?’ I sometimes use this analogy because many people are perfectly happy with life without any faith at all. They aren’t searching for anything.⁸

When I was growing up, I remember getting on the internet with a dialup modem - 28.8, 56 K - blazing speed. I remember regular wait time in minutes for some pages to load. Then we made the switch to broadband internet.

When we switched to broadband, web pages loaded instantly and we received these amazing, clear pictures without any wait. But, if you like, that describes the difference: because once we’d experienced the internet with broadband, we would never have wanted to go back to how it was before.

And once someone has experienced a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, it’s like of broadband internet compared with dial up or the clarity of television with cable vs an antenna. ‘This is what life’s all about!’ Jesus said: **I’m the way.**⁹

I am the Truth

Secondly, he brings reality to a confused world. He said: **I’m the truth.** Sometimes people say, ‘Well, you know, it’s great that he satisfies that hunger, but I don’t have a need. Isn’t it

⁷ You may use this quote or replace it with another quote from a popular celebrity.

⁸ You may personalise or reword this story to use the analogy in your context.

You may contextualise text in red to a more local word (e.g. antenna).

⁹ Delete text in red if you do not use the ‘aerial’ analogy.

just a kind of crutch for weak people who need that kind of thing? And if you need that kind of thing, then it's lovely for you. But it's not for me.' Logically, that can't be the case: because if it's true, it's true for everyone. And if it's not true, then it's not actually 'lovely' for those who believe something that isn't true, because in a way they're deluded.

C.S. Lewis put it like this. He said: 'Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.'¹⁰

So that's the question: is it true? Jesus said: **I am the truth.**

Historical Evidence

One opportunity in our life of faith is to look at the historical evidence for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is the lynchpin of Christianity. It's fascinating to me how many people who are kind of used to looking at evidence who've come to the conclusion it's true.

Professor James Simpson, the brilliant scientist whose discoveries paved the way for safe, painless surgery. Someone once asked him, 'Professor Simpson, of all these discoveries you've made, which of them was the greatest?' He said, 'Well, actually, the greatest discovery I ever made was the day I discovered Jesus Christ.'

Transition

But when Jesus said, I am the truth he was talking about more than just a kind of intellectual truth. The Hebrew understanding of truth was 'truth as experienced'. And there's a big difference between a kind of intellectual knowledge and a personal knowledge—between the head and the heart, if you like.¹¹

A Book about Nicole

Again, forgive me for using an analogy, but I've been married to my wife Nicole now for eight years. But supposing, before we were married, before I'd even met her, I went into a bookstore and there was a book about her called Nicole: The Amazing Woman!

And I thought, 'Hmm, that looks interesting. I'll pick it up and have a look.'

Chapter One: Her Sparkling Personality.

Chapter Two: Her Extraordinary Intelligence.

Chapter Three: Her Infinite Patience.

Chapter Four: Her Potential to be a Long-Suffering Wife

Chapter Five: Her Amazing Cooking Skills.

And if I'd looked at this book and thought, 'Wow, she sounds an amazing person,' that is intellectual knowledge—head knowledge. Now I can tell you she's an amazing person— that's

¹⁰ KEY QUOTE

¹¹ If you are married you may personalise this example, or use the example of someone close to you.

personal knowledge, that's the experience of eight years of marriage.

Transition

And when someone says, 'I know Jesus is the truth,' they're talking not just about being convinced of the evidence; they're talking about experiencing a relationship with the risen Jesus Christ. Jesus said: **I am the truth.**

I am the Life

Thirdly, he brings life in a dark world. He said: **I'm the way, I'm the truth, and I'm the life.**

Jesus came to set us free from the things that spoil our lives, the things that are wrong in our lives. There's a big difference from the things that we do that are wrong and the mistakes that we make. We all make lots of mistakes, and our mistakes can be relatively harmless or even amusing.

Humorous Exam Mistakes

You have probably seen mistakes made on exams that students have made. And I came across some of the ones that they published.¹²

- One person wrote this: 'In the first book of the Bible, Guinnesses, Adam and Eve were created from an apple-tree. One of their children, Cain, asked, "Am I my brother's son?"'
- Another wrote this: 'Moses led the Hebrew slaves to the Red Sea, where they made unleavened bread, which is bread made without any ingredients at all. Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the Ten Commandments. He died before he ever reached Canada.'
- 'Bach was the most famous composer in the world, and so was Handel. Handel was half-German and half-Italian and half- English. He was very large.'

Conclusion

So the mistakes that we make can be relatively harmless. But the things that we do wrong really matter. There is such a thing, as true guilt.

The great Russian novelist and Nobel Prize-winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn said this: 'The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties; but right through every human heart and through all human hearts.'

Good News

The message, the Christian message, is good news. That's what the word 'gospel' means. And the good news is this: God loves you. And he loves you and me so much that he

¹² You may want to find local examples of humorous mistakes people make (the internet is a good place to search).

came, in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, to live and to die for us. And on the cross, Jesus took everything you and I have ever done wrong, said wrong, thought wrong. He died in our place; he died for you and he died for me. In fact, if you had been the only person, he would have done it for you or for me. He loves us that much.

And because of that, it's possible for our guilt to be taken away—he came to set us free from guilt. He came to set us free from addiction—the things in our lives that we hate that get a grip of us. He came to set us free from fear—the fear of death and all the fears that go with it. Because Jesus not only died for us; he rose again from the dead. He conquered death. He set us free to know God, to have a relationship with God. He set us free to change—to be the kind of person that deep down we're longing to be.

He sends his Spirit to live within us, to begin to change us. The fruit of the Spirit beginning to grow—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness.

He set us free to love with a new dimension. Because when we've experienced God's love for us, being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that gives us a totally new love for everybody else—for God and for the world around us.

So it's not just about having some 'great feeling'; it's about going out and making a difference in a world that so desperately needs transformation.

Transition

Now, it's not easy, necessarily. Being a Christian does not mean that nothing wrong will happen to you. It's not easy. But it is not boring either. It's not untrue. It's not irrelevant to our lives. It's exciting, it's true, it's relevant: because Jesus said: **I'm the way and the truth and the life.**

Call to Action

There are a lot of different ways to respond to Jesus words, I'm the way and the truth and the life.

- Some people may say, 'Absolutely. I have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and it's the most wonderful thing.' That's fantastic.

Others might say, 'Well, I'm not so sure that I do have that relationship.' When Paul went to Athens and spoke about the good news about Jesus and the Resurrection, there were three different reactions.

- Some people think it is worthless, despicable, beneath them and not even worth considering. It is okay to be in that place, it may be not the right time for that person.
- Other people say, 'Hmm, not convinced. But I'd like to hear more, I'd like to investigate further.' And if you're in that category, I would really encourage you to investigate further. There are lots of ways you can do that. You could do it totally on your own. Just get hold of a New Testament, and read it for yourself. Or you might say, 'Well, I need a bit of help.' There are opportunities here at First every week for you to take a next step in your faith.

- Third category when Paul went to Athens is some believed. They only heard once, and they said, 'I'd love that!' And there may just be one person here today who says, 'I'd love that! I would really love to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.' The good news is you can experience that right now.

It's a very simple thing: Turning away from the things that we know are wrong, saying sorry. Thanking Jesus for dying for us; putting our faith in him. And then saying please: 'Please come and fill me with your Spirit.' *Sorry, thank you, please.*

Invitation

And I want to make it possible for anyone who's here who'd like to pray that prayer to do so. I'm not going to ask anyone to pray it out loud, but in the silence of your hearts. God can hear the prayers in our hearts. Jesus is here—he's risen from the dead; you can speak to him today. Just echo this silently under your breath.

Will you pray with me?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, I'm sorry for the things in my life that have been wrong. And if anything comes to mind, ask his forgiveness.

I now turn away from everything that I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died for me on the Cross. I now receive your forgiveness. I trust you with my life.

And I ask you please to come and to fill me with your Spirit, to be with me forever. Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.