

Jesus – The Way, the Truth, and the Life

I've always been a fan of orchestras. Whilst I've never seen one live (Although that would be amazing!), I've heard plenty in films (Star Wars, Inception!), television shows and documentaries. I love how the composition of the music usually starts off at a slow pace, gradually increasing, getting more intense, till finally building to a crescendo. The emotions that are evoked is something stunning. It's magical, beautiful, haunting and striking. And it sets the stage for what's to happen next.

That's kind of how I look at John's gospel in the Bible.

(SLIDE 1) The start of the gospel is John setting the tone for what's to come. It starts off with this incredible picture of who Jesus is – the Word from the beginning, the Word who is God and is with God. It then chronicles his public ministry; we see him perform many miracles and provide some amazing teaching. The tempo is rising. The whole thing centres around 'timing' and that His 'hour has not yet come.' The 'hour' refers to the Cross, which has always been before Jesus His whole life. And in chapter twelve Jesus says,

(ANIMATION)

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (12:23-24) and if we listen very closely, we can hear the music building.

During all this time people are listening to the 'symphony' of his life and they are making up their own minds about who Jesus is and whether they like the type of music being composed around Him. And sad to say, most people don't. In fact, it's the religious leaders of the day who are plotting his 'hour' at hand. They are the ones sticking fingers in their ears to not hear the symphony. They are the ones scheming and making plans to kill him.

However, some people do hear the symphony and they choose to follow Jesus. They love the sound of the music, they love the tempo and beat, they love the way it brings things out of them. And even though they might not understand everything happening around them, in faith they place their trust in Him.

These people are called disciples. Now, imagine having a front row seat to see all the amazing miracles that Jesus performed. To see him feed 5000 people with a couple bits of bread and some fish. To see blind people being able to see for the first time. Or what about seeing ol' Lazarus raised from the dead. After four days! That must have been something to see! And smell!

But as David touched on last week,

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Lots of people then and now see miracles in their lives, yet they still don't believe in the Miracle Maker. See for me, as amazing as those things would be to see, I think even more amazing would be quality time with Jesus. To sit in a room with Him and hear Him talk and teach and love – that would be enough for me.

To be one of his close disciples that He cared so much for, brought so much into their lives, and taught them about what it means to live a life truly for God. That's what gets me. The smaller group, the one-on-one discipleship, the quality time with God Himself.

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And that's where we find ourselves this morning in our series 'Hello I'm Jesus.' We're in an upper room with Jesus and His disciples. His public ministry is over for now and Jesus is focusing His efforts on spending time with His disciples, preparing them for His departure, encouraging them about what's to come, and showing them the gift from heaven that is soon to be unwrapped. Jesus is going; but someone else is coming.

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THE SET-UP

We pick up the story in John chapter 14 verse one:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (14:1-3)

Prior to this, Jesus has been talking about His death and the one who will betray Him, Judas. Then Peter, perhaps his closest disciple, vows to lay down his life for Jesus but will end up denying him three times. It's safe to say that all of the disciples are at this stage troubled and confused; perhaps even anxious and scared about what lies ahead.

Jesus knows what lies ahead and so He takes them to what matters most. He's going to His Father's house to prepare a place for them. This is an incredible promise. Jesus is saying to them, "Hey guys listen up, you don't need to be afraid of what's happening and what's coming up. Just believe. I'm going to my Father's house where there's a spot for you. It's got your name on it. And once I've prepared it, I'm coming back so I can take you to live there with me forever."

Imagine hearing that for the first time. What would it do to your spirit? What assurance would it bring to knowing where you are going when you die? As disciples of Jesus, we have a heavenly home. A place that Jesus has personally prepared for each of us. A place prepared out of love and acceptance. A place to be with our heavenly Father for all eternity. What will we do there? It remains largely unknown; but what we do know is that this will be far better than this earth, and by far surpass our greatest desires.

I don't know about you, but I'm pretty excited about my heavenly home. Hoping mine has an entertainment suite, you know with a bowling arcade and movie theatre! And I suspect the disciples with Jesus were excited as well. They were living in a time of uncertainty. The man they had spent most of their time with over the recent years, the man they believed to have come directly from God and was His Son, the man who they had faith was the Messiah – this man Jesus was talking to them about some pretty heavy stuff.

I suggest that the atmosphere was pretty intense, as He talked about what was to come. But even though they didn't initially understand what was to come, they could come back to the hope and promise that Jesus has made to them. And so can we too.

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Let's keep reading, verse 5:

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?" (14:5)

Thomas is the realist in the group. He says it how it is. What are you talking about, Jesus? We don't know where you are going so how on earth can we know the way? Thomas is struggling a bit here to keep up with what Jesus is saying. So Jesus makes it clear and simple:

(ANIMATION)

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (14:6-7)

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THE WAY

The orchestra starts to build and Jesus declares He is the way. In life there are so many sign posts pointing in many directions – how can we know which is the right way? Do all paths lead up to the top of the mountain? Well no, not necessarily. But I've heard it described this way. Imagine you're in a plane coming to land at the airport. You're looking down and you can see the runway. To the left of it are trees and bushes, to the right are buildings. Where are you going to land? Go too left and you'll be in the rough, head too right and you're crashing into a building. This will have devastating results for you and all on board the plane. There's only one way to land safely - on the runway. Jesus is saying He is the runway of life. He is the way, the **only** way, to God. Not "a way" but "the way".

(ANIMATION)

You've likely heard the phrase like "All religions lead to God." But what God? Is it a God that can't be known? A God that is in all things and is like karma? A God who wants the death of non-converts or infidels? Don't all religions lead to God? Well, you be the judge. Many religions point you in the way they think you and I should go, they may even say follow this or that religious leader or strive to keep this or that teaching or philosophy. But only Jesus claimed to be the way. He didn't say "There's the way over there, how about you follow it. He said, "Follow Me – I am the way". Jesus says clearly and unambiguously, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." If you want to find the one true God, you need to come to Him through Jesus – the Way. And the only way to do that is through the Cross.

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THE TRUTH

Jesus doesn't stop there. With so many competing and contradictory voices all doing their best to be heard, we can hear the orchestra music amplify as Jesus exclaims "I am the truth.

All throughout history, various organisations, philosophies, and religions have tried to bridge the gap between man and God. We've tried to go our own way about things. Jesus is the bridge between man and God. God Himself came down to reveal the Truth. Himself. Truth is a person, Jesus Christ. We can come to Jesus and find the answers to life's big questions and discover the real truth.

(ANIMATION)

And as Christians we need not be afraid of examining the evidence and looking into science. Dr Francis Collins, Director of the Human Genome Projects, and one of the world's leading scientists in the fields of genetics, was interviewed on the BBC. When the interviewer asked him about his faith and why he had turned from atheism to Christianity, Dr Collins said it was after reading CS Lewis' book "Mere Christianity" that he realised that his arguments against believing in God were intellectually weak. They were weak in light of truth. The more he studied science the more he came to see that faith in an intelligent Creator was far more logical and reasonable than claiming there was no God.

He began to see his need for God and committed his life to Christ - and he is one of the world's top scientists today.

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Dr Collins has said: "I actually do not believe that there are any collisions between what I believe as a Christian and what I know and have learned about as a scientist. ... I am not aware of any reasons why one cannot be a completely dedicated person of faith who believes that God inspired the writings in the Bible and also be a rigorous intellectually completely honest scientist who does not accept things about the natural world until they are proven."

Many of us here this morning would agree with this. We're not satisfied with status quo answers and we seek to challenge truth and science. This is a good thing. Once we stack everything up, we may not understand it all, but we may just come to see that truth is personified in the person of Jesus. He is the truth that helps us to make sense of the world around us.

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THE LIFE

As the orchestra winds up even more, Jesus announces He is the life. Jesus is not just referring to the life now that we have, but to our spiritual life. Jesus is the source of real life. Think about how earlier in John's gospel He introduced Himself to the Samaritan Woman at the well and claimed to offer living water to those who believe in Him. Jesus is that living water, He is the one who satisfies our thirst and saves our souls.

(ANIMATION)

When we truly come to Him and live for Him, nothing else will matter. Our hearts will find the longing they have craved for and our purpose will be to know Jesus more and more each day.

If you haven't experienced this in your life, let me suggest that you have not fully come to Jesus and given everything over to Him. If He has not given you a burden for those who are spiritually lost; If He has not given you a desire for your heavenly home that we talked about beforehand; If He has not shown you what it means to live for Him – then this morning you have the choice to come to Him and receive this new life in full.

Jesus is the one who can fulfil all your needs. But He's not like a God who we can push the right buttons and say the right things and hey presto we receive what we want. He is a personal God who desires most of all to have a relationship with us and to show us that He is the way, the truth and the life.

And that He has a place for us – our true place. A true destination. So the destination is heaven – the heavenly home and the heavenly reward. But how do we get there? How do we **find** the way? How do we **know** the truth? And how do we **experience** the life?

Is it by being religious and going to church? Is it giving all we have to the poor? Is it trying to live a good life? Is it going on a pilgrimage? Is it meditating or studying the Bible in an effort to please God?

These are all good things, but if there's no relationship with Jesus we might as well pack up our bags and go home.

See, the orchestra that is playing the music all point to Jesus. It magnifies and illuminates His life. As it builds, so too does the weight of words that Jesus uses; the message that He carries; the things that He promises for His disciples.

Jesus – the way, the truth, and the life – doesn't want people to miss out. He wants people to know exactly who He is and why He came to this earth. He wants them to know also why He has to leave. And who is to come. Verse 15:

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"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. (14:15-20)

(SLIDE)

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (14:25-27)

(SLIDE)

"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.'

If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. (14:28-29)

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THE SPIRIT

Jesus is like “I’ll be going soon guys, but don’t worry, someone else is coming.” Someone who would be with them forever. The Holy Spirit. Brian will talk more about the gift of the Holy Spirit in a few weeks but for now, The Holy Spirit is called the Counsellor or Comforter. But the Holy Spirit does far more than just show sympathy. Yes, He brings us comfort, but the picture here is of someone standing beside us giving us guidance, counsel, courage and strength – helping us through all of life.

After Jesus left the disciples, the Holy Spirit was sent to be with them – to care for and guide them and also to lead them deeper into their understanding of God's truth and plan.

THE CHALLENGE

The challenge this morning is that we may go to church and know a lot about God but unless we are true followers of Jesus and have the Holy Spirit inside us we cannot really appreciate or understand spiritual things. Jesus tells His disciples, “But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.” Every true believer has the Holy Spirit. He is with us. We cannot believe without His gracious, constant working in our hearts and lives. The Holy Spirit wants to fill each one of us and empower us to live for Jesus.

Jesus says to His disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.” Trust in me – I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

In Twenty First century Tauranga Jesus declares the same thing: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life – and no one comes to the Father except through me.

The symphony of his life, death and resurrection is still playing today.

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Can you feel that orchestra winding up? Will we believe?

Can you hear the tempo raising? Will we receive?

Can you sense the crescendo coming? Will our lives be different?

Let’s pray.

God of the Universe, challenge us where we need to be challenged. Comfort us where we need to be comforted. Help us be about the things that you are about. Give us a burden for a life truly lived for you. Break us out of our comfort zones. Fill each of us with your Holy Spirit. And Jesus, help us to live every day believing you are the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen.