**“I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE”**

JOHN 14:1-14

This morning we’ll be looking at the 6th of Jesus “I AM” statements. There are seven of these contained in the Gospel of John – “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6); “I am the light of the world” (Jn 8); “I am the door of the sheep” (Jn 10); “I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10); “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11); “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14); “I am the true vine” (Jn 15). In all seven of these statements Jesus uses metaphors to describe His saving relationship to the world. His choice of the phrase “I am” is intentional. It refers back to Exo 3:14 where God reveals His name to Moses – I AM (***Yahweh*** is Hebrew for “He is”). By using this phrase Jesus is, in essence, claiming to be the Yahweh of the O.T. (John 8:58). This is clearly how the Pharisees understood Jesus which is why they picked up stones to kill Him. They considered His words to be blasphemy!

The setting for today’s lesson is the upper room. It is the Thursday night of Passion Week. Jesus is celebrating the Passover with His disciples. The question was asked last week – was this last supper that Jesus is enjoying with His disciples here, is it the Passover meal, also called the Passover seder dinner? My answer is yes, it IS the Passover meal. Why do I say that? Because Matthew, Mark and Luke all state that it was. Remember when Jesus told His disciples to go prepare for the Passover? Remember how they went and found the upper room? Well Mark 14:12 says, “And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to him, ‘Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?’ And that’s when Jesus gives them instructions about going to Jerusalem and finding a man carrying a jar and so on. So as I read scripture, it seems clear to me that Jesus is not merely eating some meal in association with Passover week with His disciples, but He is eating the Passover meal itself.

We looked at Ch 13 the last two weeks. John 13:1 which begins this whole section on the upper room discourse says, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” So Jesus, filled with love and compassion for His disciples, these guys who had left all to follow Him, knowing their spiritual state, that they were still confused about His going away, knowing they still were anticipating that He would soon set up His kingdom, realizing just how fragile their faith was at this point, uses what remaining time He has to encourage them. He washes each of His disciples’ feet, a lesson in humility. He unmasks Judas as His betrayer. He instructs them to love each other, John 13:34, “just as I have loved you.” And then when Peter declares that he would lay down his life for Jesus, Jesus tells Peter that before the rooster crows he will deny Him three times. Jesus knows what is about to happen and He knows all the details. He knows His disciples are not really expecting what will happen beginning later that evening and the next day. And so Jesus in these chapters, 13 thru 16 prepares His disciples for it. Much of what Jesus says they will not fully understand until later after His resurrection (which John states in Ch 12).

So that brings up to Chapter 14. [cover picture – how many disciples are sitting with Jesus?] To the 11 remaining true disciple, this is what Jesus says…

1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. [Jesus knows where they are] Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.”

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you DO know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.”

12 “Truly, truly, I say to you [to all 11 disciples], whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

OK so I mentioned before that in the upper room discourse, which goes thru Chapter 16, Jesus gives to His disciples His parting words, His legacy, words of comfort and encouragement which includes several promises. These promises are for the disciples, but they are also for all believers from that day until today, including us. We know this from what Jesus says in His prayer to the Father in John 17: “I do not ask for these only [these disciples here] but also for those who will believe in me thru Your word” (17:20). So Jesus’ words to His disciples in the upper room are for us as well.

V 1, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Jesus knows His disciples hearts. They’re filled with doubt and fear. They’re confused, depressed, disappointed. Their hopes of being part of Jesus’ kingdom have been crushed. He’s talking about dying and going away. Their hearts are really troubled. So much uncertainty from their limited perspective!

V 1 continues, “Believe in God; believe also in me.” This is a claim to deity. It’s not anything new to the disciples. Jesus the Son of God – they believed He was the Son of God – Jesus has been claiming to be one with the Father. As far back as Ch 5 we read that “He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God (v 18). In John 10 He said, “I and the Father are one (v 30). So Jesus has been driving this point home.

V 2, “In my Father's house are many rooms.” OK, so where is Jesus’ Father’s house? It’s in heaven, where God dwells. So here we see the first of several promises that Jesus makes to His disciples and to us. He’s preparing a place in heaven for them and for us, an eternal home with God. “If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? “I wouldn’t tell you this if it wasn’t the truth.”

V 3, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” Jesus Himself has prepared a place for us. So what is this place like? We get a glimpse of it in Revelation Ch 21. You have a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem and God Himself says, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” It sounds like a wonderful place to be!

And then Jesus in V 3 goes on to say, “I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.” Jesus says, “I’m leaving, but I’m coming back again – for you!” I will personally come and take you to Myself to heaven.

So the question I was asked this week was, “Where will we be when Jesus comes back for us?” It depends. Since the time of Acts Ch 1 when Jesus ascended back to heaven, most believers throughout history have died. They have experienced physical death. How does Jesus take a saint to Himself when they die? Acts Ch 7 gives us some understanding of this. Stephen has just finished his long speech to the high priest and religious leaders and they’re not happy with Him at all --“Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he [Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ [Stephen can see Jesus and He’s standing up. Why?] But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep. [Jesus was standing to receive Stephen to Himself]

This is an important theological truth. Paul says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. I believe that when a child of God, a Christian, a born again believer, a sinner saved by grace dies, Jesus welcomes them personally into heaven. There’s no St Peter at the pearly gates. Jesus Himself receives you.

However, if before we die, Jesus returns for His church in what we call the rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18) then Paul says, “we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them (the resurrected bodies of the saints who have already died) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

So in our passage in V 3 Jesus is giving His disciples some real words of comfort. Jesus is doing just what Isaiah 50:4 says. He is sustaining with a word those who are weary. So here we have promises of an eternal home in heaven and that He will return for us. That’s BIG!!

Well Jesus says, v 4, “you know the way to where I am going.” That’s when Thomas speaks up and says, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus responds in v 6 with a profound statement, a fundamental theological truth, a tenet of our faith: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” What is Jesus saying? “I am THE way to heaven. I am THE way to God. I’m the only way. It’s interesting that the first name of Christianity was The Way. Back in John 10 Jesus said He was the door to God. I am the truth. My words are true. I am the life. I am the giver of eternal life. That’s why we hold to the doctrine that the only way to be saved is thru faith in Jesus Christ. No one comes to the Father, you don’t get to God, except thru Jesus. In Acts 4 Peter filled with the Holy Spirit declared to the Jewish religious leaders, “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11-12) Paul told the Philippian jailer when he asked what he had to do to be saved, Paul said this – “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

There are not multiple ways to heaven. There is only one way and that is thru Jesus.

In v 7-11 Jesus drives home the point that if you have seen Him, Jesus, then you have seen the Father. Jesus is driving home the fundamentally important truth of the absolute unity of Himself, the Son, and the Father. You’ll have to excuse the disciples. Their Trinitarian doctrine is not quite fully developed yet. But they will get there. Jesus says, “My words are God’s words, the Father’s words. My works are His works.” He wraps it up in v 11, “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.”

In v 12 Jesus tells His disciples that they will do greater works, miracles, than He, Jesus did. Of course they will do many of the same miracles that Jesus did – heal the sick, make the lame to walk, the blind to see, raise the dead. Read the book of Acts. And throughout church history there have been many who had these spiritual gifts. By greater Jesus means, not that they will be greater in magnitude, but they will be more widespread. Jesus did His miracles in a relatively small corner of the world. The disciples would perform many works around the world.

In v 13-14 Jesus gives His disciples and us another promise. This one is often misunderstood. He says, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” What is Jesus saying? We like to focus on “whatever you ask, this I will do” and “if you ask me anything I’ll do it.” But there is an important stipulation put on this promise – IN MY NAME. What does it mean to ask something in Jesus name? Just tack Jesus name on at the end of your prayer and God will be somehow obligated to give it to you? No. What we ask should be done for His purposes, for the glory of God, to further the kingdom of God. In other words our motivation is the key. Why do I want that? Why for example to I pray for Tom Egan to be healed. So that thru that God will get all the praise and the glory.

So be careful v 13-14 are not a blank check for you to fill out. Our prayer requests go like this. “God, this is what I want, just being honest. But ultimately what I want is Your will to be done and for your name to be glorified.” [examples]

So this is a promise related to our prayer life. If you want power in your prayer life pray for God’s will.

This section of John, the upper room discourse has several promises and we will unpack them as we go thru these chapters. We’ve seen three this morning – promise of an eternal home in heaven, promise that Jesus is coming back for us, promise of power in prayer. So let’s sing about His promises. That great hymn, “Standing on the Promises,” first and last verses. As you sing, make this your song of commitment to Him.