

John 14:1-6

Some of us enjoy math more than others of us do. But we all had it in school. Some of you have that privilege right now. And we all use math in our daily life. Now did you realize that mathematics is an offensive thing? I don't mean that some become offended at it because they struggle with it in school. Math is offensive because it is so exclusive. Two plus two equals four...not five, or six, or three. Math does not allow for one to hold to a differing point of view. When doing math, there is only one way—one truth.

What we learn from the study of mathematics may help us understand the words of Jesus in our text. "I am the Way," He says, "and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." The Christian Faith excludes all other religions. Jesus does not allow for any other way except for Him alone. He says of Himself: I alone am the Truth; and in Me alone there is life.

In our modern age, His words are highly offensive. We ought to be affirming each other (we hear), not telling others that what they believe is wrong. In the world's point of view all religions are equally valid. No one religion has the right to claim that it alone proclaims the truth; that it alone is the way to heaven.

And my sinful flesh agrees with the world. Jesus' words are difficult for me to bear. What about that poor person living in Africa or Southern Asia who has never had the chance to even hear about Jesus? So he will perish forever? What about that poor baby whose mother made the decision to abort her? That baby will miss out on heaven? What about my loved one—my son, daughter, spouse, grandchild—who is living apart from Christ? Are you saying that my loved one's soul is in danger of perishing? Our weak human flesh does not much care for these words of Jesus. They are so exclusive, so definite, so final.

But Jesus does not use these words as a club to brutally beat up any who disagree. These words are an invitation; they are wonderful Gospel. "No one comes to the Father except through Me," He says—because no one else came down from heaven, was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. No one else was crucified for our offenses, and then raised again for our justification. By these words, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life," Jesus would draw all sinners to Himself, so that all would be saved through Him.

But the world, sadly, rejects the Word of Life. This world is perishing along with all of its sins and evil lusts. The world has no use for the only Savior of mankind. But you are not of the world. You belong to Jesus. He has called you to Himself; He has drawn you out of this dying world to give you faith in His words for you: I am your Way, your Truth, your Life—you will come to the Father through Me.

And this we believe, even in the face of a hostile world. And, in fact, the world hates us because we belong to the only Way, Truth, and Life. The world says: You Christians are so pompous—you think you have the only answer to man's deepest need! Friend, it's not easy living as Christian people in a sinful world. We are tempted so strongly on every side, and even from within our own sinful heart, to water down these words of our Lord. "Well, maybe Jesus doesn't mean that He is the only way...maybe someone can be saved who doesn't believe in Jesus."

Do not give in to this trap of Satan. The devil always attacks the Word of God. He always attempts to twist its meaning. He always would have us doubt whether God really meant what He has said. “Did God really say?” the devil told Eve in the Garden. He says the same thing to you—“Did Jesus really say that He is the only way to heaven? Did He really say that no one comes to the Father except through Him?”

Jesus’ words may offend the world, and even our own sinful flesh. But His words are the answer to our deepest need. Trusting in Him, we have what His words give—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. These words are not a threat but a promise. You who are God’s people in Jesus need have no concerns, no worries, no doubts about your salvation. Your goodness is not a way into heaven—Jesus is. Therefore your wretched and sinful past cannot keep you from your home above. Jesus freely gives you heaven. Your behavior, your efforts, your decisions play no part in where you go when you die. You trust in Jesus. He forgives you. He gives you life. He, not you, is the Way to the Father. And He has brought you to Himself through the waters of Holy Baptism.

You see, when we confess that Jesus is the Way, and Truth, and Life, we are also confessing this of Holy Baptism—for Christ has joined Himself to His Sacraments. Baptism is the way to heaven, for it forgives your sins. Baptism is the truth...we trust what God has promised in these holy waters; Baptism does not lie. Baptism is the life, for it gives us eternal life; it gives us Jesus. And since you have been washed in Baptism’s waters, you are safe in Christ—the Way to heaven.

Some years ago an American citizen was sentenced to death by a Spanish court. The American ambassador intervened, but all of his efforts failed. The man was led out by a company of soldiers, blindfolded, and about to be shot to death by a volley of bullets. The American ambassador then walked up to that condemned man and wrapped around him the Stars and Stripes. “Whoever dares to shoot at this man,” he said, “will bring upon his country the anger and power of that country which this flag represents.” There stood the man, and before him the soldiers. And although a single shot could have killed him, he was as safe wrapped in that flag as though encased in triple steel. Even so, in Baptism Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, has wrapped Himself around you—clothing you with His holy innocence, protecting you from the power of sin, death, and hell.

Let not your heart be troubled. You trust in God. Trust that you are God’s forgiven child in Jesus; that your baptism has done this for you. For where Baptism is, there is Jesus; there is the Way to heaven. And that Way you know. And that Way you follow. It is not mere coincidence that you are here this day in God’s House to hear these comforting words of your Savior. It is not mere chance that you love to come here week after week to receive Jesus’ Word of forgiveness; to be given His body and blood for you. For you are the Baptized. You are the called of God. You are His people in Christ Jesus. And you know that Jesus, and only Jesus, is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. And that is why you know there is a mansion being prepared for you. And He will come again to take you to be with Him, so that you may be with Him forever. Rejoice in this wonderful news for you! Amen.