

“Images of Jesus: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life””

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In our New Testament passage,<sup>1</sup> we hear Jesus’ assertion: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”

So how is Jesus “the Way”?

Have you ever been in a new place and can’t find where it is you want to go?

You stop and ask someone for help and they proceed to give you a confusing list of lefts and rights and unknown landmarks . . . all of which lead you to only one conclusion . . . you will have to stop again and ask for directions from someone else.

Or you might have had a different experience of needing help in knowing where to go. You stop with a confused look on your face, looking around for possible clues of your destination and before you can articulate your need, there is someone in front of you asking — “may I help you?”

You explain to them that you are lost and instead of giving you a long string of directions, they simply say — “let me take you there myself.”<sup>2</sup>

This is the way of Jesus . . . eager to help us and ready to show us the way.

Jesus is not giving us a series of confusing lefts and rights and of unknown reference points. Jesus is giving us Himself as both the path and the guide.

Each and every day, Jesus can show us the way . . . guide us, strengthen us, make provision for us.

Jesus’ pronouncement that He is the Way is an assurance, not a threat,

As we can see in our Old Testament readings, the way, the truth, and the life have long been concepts associated with living the godly life.

The Bible describes the godly way as walking with God and the first letter to John tells us that we are “to walk as Jesus did.”<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, pilgrimage is often used as a metaphor for the Christian journey. We are invited to be travelers and our yes matters.

I have had the privilege of walking some pilgrimage trails. One of the most well-known pilgrimage paths is called the Camino, which in Spanish means “the Way.”

I remember having dinner with a young woman who came to the Camino out of desperation. She had acquired a difficult disease that also bred a debilitating anxiety. She had to try something new and so she had come to the Camino.

She recounted a conversation she had with a fellow pilgrim. She said he kept telling her that the Camino would provide her what she needed. and gave her all types of examples of how it had happened for others. After a long pause, he said quietly — of course, you know that the Camino is really God, right?

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:1-7

<sup>2</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John - Volume 2*, 157.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, “Walk, Walking,” 923.

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She tentatively said yes to him, but it came more and more clear as she walked the Camino that someone was with her, tending to her, healing her. It all came into focus for her when she sat in a chapel along the Camino and suddenly noticed the stained glass window. It was of Jesus with the disciples and written into the stained glass was our focus statement for today, except it was in Spanish and so she read, “I am the Way” as “I am the Camino.”

And the Camino will provide. Jesus as the Way — the road and the guise — will provide.

This sense of Jesus as the Way . . . the one who is the path and who guides us and provides for us along the path . . . was so keenly understood by the early church that before followers of Jesus were called Christians, they were called people of the Way.

To be a Christian is to be a follower of the Way. And what has always made the Christian way so remarkable is that we are not following an abstract theology or philosophical precept, we are following a person.

We notice in the Scriptures that time and time again people would come to Jesus asking questions. The majority of these questions were about how to live a godly life. In other words, people were constantly asking Jesus to show them the way.<sup>4</sup>

Each and every day, Jesus can show us the way . . . guide us, strengthen us, make provision for us.

Jesus acts as the Way when He models for us the way of faith in hard times.

A businessman tells a story of how he inherited a business that was failing. Try as he might, the man could not find a way to solve the business’s problems. He felt overwhelmed and defeated. At his lowest moment, he heard God’s voice say to him — “my Son always turned to me when He was in need, why won’t you do the same?” The man said that he prayed and went to the office and prayerfully worked through the issues that were causing the logjam.

It is interesting that Jesus does not just stop at the identity of being the Way.

Jesus goes on to claim to be the Truth.

If someone is true, they are trustworthy.

If someone speaks truth, they are trustworthy.

If someone does not value truth, that is problematic because God and Jesus are on the side of truth.

In John’s Gospel, truth is always associated with reality.

To the philosophers and theologians of Jesus’ day, what was true was something that was real, that was reliable.

By claiming to be THE Truth, Jesus is claiming to be THE reality.

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<sup>4</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John - Volume 1*, 45-46.

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Jesus urges His disciples to saturate themselves in the reality of God.

Eugene Peterson’s translation gives voice to Jesus’ words this way . . . “Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don’t be afraid of missing out. You’re my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself.”<sup>5</sup>

As disciples, we are urged to stubbornly hold onto trust in the reality of God.<sup>6</sup> And Jesus helps us do that.

The last part of Jesus’ identity statement is the claim to be the Life.

And this is not the “life is a bowl of cherries” life or the “life is a box of chocolates” life<sup>7</sup> — this is the abundant life.

It is life with God. It is both life that we were made for and life beyond our imaginings.

It is true this life is hard and there are hard things in it, but we have a God who came down to be with us in the hardness. He too suffered but He showed us how to walk through suffering into new hope and into new life.

This is what we were made for . . . to abide in God and to live in love. And to know an abundant life filled with hope and mercy and grace.

And Jesus shows us the truth of this.

Lord, will You show us the way so we may walk in truth and have life abundantly in You. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 12:29-32 (The Message)

<sup>6</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John - Volume 2*, 152.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Beyond Words*, 225.