

Do You Know the Way?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 January 2023

Preacher: Jonathan Middleton

[0 : 0 0] so we're reading this morning from john chapter 13 beginning at verse 31 which is on page 1081 in your bibles when he was gone jesus said now the son of man is glorified and god is glorified in him if god is glorified in him god will glorify the son in himself and will glorify him at once my children i will be with you only a little longer you will look for me and just as i told the jews so i tell you now where i am going you cannot come a new command i give you love one another as i have loved you so you must love one another by this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another simon peter asked him lord where are you going jesus replied where i'm going you cannot follow now but you will follow later peter asked lord why can't i follow you now i will lay down my life for you then jesus answered will you really lay down your life for me very truly i tell you before the cock crows you will disown me three times 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'm 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 you know the way to the place where i'm going thomas said to him lord we don't know where you are you are going so how can we know the way 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 this is the word of the lord well good morning and let me add my welcome to martin's it's good to see you and i don't know about you but my appetite is whetted after hearing all these book reviews and i've been certainly challenged and uh impressed upon about the urgency that we have in sharing the good news about the risen lord jesus we're starting a new series this morning in john's gospel in the upper room on the eve of jesus death and it's really a privileged um invitation that the apostle john gives us to come into the upper room and sit beneath jesus as he teaches his disciples preparing them for life after him and uh towards the end of uh this gospel john explicitly states what his purpose is in writing he's written it so that we uh you may believe that jesus is the christ the son of god and that by believing you may have life in his name so let's uh join together in prayer again and ask for god's help to that end father we give thanks to you for your word to us this morning we pray that you would give us ears to hear

and we pray that by the power of the holy spirit you would address each of us here lord where there is unbelief we pray that you would convert that to trust in your son and that by believing we would enjoy new life in him for it is in his name that we pray amen well if you are planning on going somewhere you need to know at least these two things you need to know uh where you're going your destination and you need to know how you're going to get there your route now you're probably going to need to know all sorts of other things as well like what you're going to need to bring with you and things like that but this applies to all aspects of life all sorts of things so if you're going from a to b or if you're planning a holiday or an excursion if you're mapping out your career path if you're an individual setting your goals for the new year or you're a company that's re-planning your strategy for the year ahead you need to know at least these two basic things you need to know where you're going and you need to know how you're going to get there and those two things at the very least and that can apply to the trivial and the mundane as well as it can to the profound so yesterday morning our six-year-old daughter came through and announced that she was planning to make pancakes for breakfast for us that's all well and good we can encourage that but she then went on to say that her so that was our goal she then went on to say that the route she was going to take for that was she was going to do it all by herself now she's never done that before and so we scratched our heads a little bit we wanted to encourage her but let's just say that there was something of a conflict in the domestic strategy department in our household yesterday morning we needed to recalibrate expectations reset and refine the way that she was going to meet

her goal with supervision until she's competent in that regards but where you're going and how you're going to get there that's basically the line of questioning of the disciples right in the heart of our passage this morning isn't it just read along with me again these two questions chapter 13 verse 36 peter asks anxiously lord where are you going and then in 14 verse 5 thomas betraying his own confusion asks lord how do we get there how can we know the way when we've no idea where you're going in the first place so basically where are you going and how do we get there and the reason they're asking jesus about where he is going because as followers of jesus where they're going is bound up where he's going they have a vested interest in that and if we are followers of jesus if we count ourselves as jesus disciples uh this morning actually even if we're not followers of jesus then where he's going is going to determine ultimately where we're going our eternal destination and our trouble our trouble is exactly the same as the disciples we are short-sighted you see we can be so preoccupied with all that's going on in the here and now that we can lose sight of the eternal horizon

and so that's uh what's needed a reset and we're going to see that jesus is showing his disciples we need to shift our focus to the ultimate goal uh of where we're going and how we're going to get there and actually it's only by doing that that we're able to live rightly now in light of that future destiny so we've got two main headings this morning they should be in the leaflet if you were handed that on the way in if you find it helpful to make notes jesus is going away for a while firstly jesus is going away for a while and secondly jesus is the way for his own so firstly then jesus is going away for a while okay picture uh the scene in our passage it's intense the atmosphere is thick visceral almost uh claustrophobic jesus is with his closest friends the guys he's hand-picked to be his disciples have been on the road with him for the past three years not quite 12 angry men maybe 12 anxious men would be more like it and they're huddled together in this room in this upstairs room to eat the passover meal together on the night before jesus will be crucified and outside they're literally buying for jesus blood in jerusalem and so the suspense is building and amongst the clatter of knives and forks is mention of a traitor among them so you can just imagine the tension in the room then in chapter 30 verse 30 the verse just immediately before our passage of satan having already entered him judas went out and we've got this dramatic almost cinematic moment and in this gospel which is all about the light and how jesus is the light who comes into the world who shines in the darkness we have this incredibly ominous line and it was night and if this was a thriller or a horror movie it's the bit where there's the thunderclap and the downpour and the torrential rain and the sinister music and you just have this sense that there's something really bad that's about to happen and not only is it ominous but it's imminent now says jesus in verse 31 now is the son of man glorified and it's not now as in right that second but now as in jesus leaving to betray him is triggering the chain of events that will lead to jesus's death and resurrection and returning to glory well it's here only as judas slopes off into the night that jesus begins his teaching in earnest and he's a bit enigmatic isn't he for this language about glory and being glorified and he says something troubling something that fills them with a kind of overwhelming sense of dread and it sounds to them like abandonment he tells them that he's going away verse 33 little children i will be with you only a little longer where i'm going you cannot come and their ears prick up and simon peter pipes up lord whoa where are you going where are you going lord so where is jesus going exactly but before we come on to that question we'll answer uh see to answer that

in a minute i want us to briefly take note of just a couple of things firstly do you see how tender jesus is jesus is about to face the horrors of his own death and back in uh 21 of chapter 13 we're told that he himself is troubled in his spirit shouldn't his disciples be comforting him and yet here he is deeply concerned about his beloved friends deeply conscious of how hard these next days and months will be for them keenly aware of how painful the prospect of his absence will be and he addresses them ever so tenderly my children and then in verse 1 of chapter 14 he says do not let your hearts be troubled such is jesus love for those he is about to lay down his life for that's jesus tenderness secondly note peter's response in verse 37 why can't i follow you now i will lay down my life for you in some ways this is commendable wanting to shoulder responsibility responsibility in some ways it's typical simon peter wanting to be the big guy the problem solver jumping in with both feet we love a have a go hero don't we someone like him who meets a challenge head on but in many ways it's typical of all of us in our fallen humanity each of us wanting to be our own saviors each of us wanting to save ourselves and in our own eyes thinking somehow that might be possible peter says i'm invested lord i'm all in i will lay down my life for you to which jesus replies really peter he's completely misunderstood the nature of jesus's mission but we can't save ourselves our only

hope is Jesus and so we return to our question where is Jesus going what does he tell us he tells us a couple of things verse 33 he says that where he's going we cannot come at least not yet let's go down to verse 36 he says to Peter that he can't follow him now but will do so later and again putting ourselves in the disciples shoes these are quite enigmatic statements on their own but Jesus in the first four verses of chapter 14 gives us a picture that explains why we cannot go there yet or of our own accord he's talking about going to heaven isn't he follow along with 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 prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am so Jesus is going away but actually it's a blessing that he's going away and he's coming back again and this is where all that language of glory at the beginning of our passage begins to make sense he's left his home in glory to come into this world and now he's returning to his father's glory and in fact Jesus death and the cross and his resurrection is his glory and incredibly he's made a way for us to be with him there in his father's presence to be with him in heaven now what presumption it would be on our part for us to speak of such a thing or even think of such a thing if Christ hadn't first spoken of it before us what an idea that we can be with him in glory so his disciples are not losing him after all or at least they're only losing him temporarily in order for us to gain him for all eternity and yes it makes sense that if he's going to heaven then we can't simply follow him there on our terms and on our initiatives where he's going is not of this world his is a cosmic destination can't simply go into the nearest petrol station and pick up a road map to heaven but if we're setting our sights on heaven we need to know where we're going if our goal is an eternal destination with Jesus then we're going to need to know the way so how do we get there this leads us on to our second heading

[17:50] Jesus is the way for his own Jesus is talking about a reality and when someone dies and they're not a believer it's not uncommon in our society secular though it is to hear comments like they're smiling down on us from above and you hear this kind of thing even from folk who'd otherwise say that they don't believe in anything beyond the material world they're in a better place now things like that and of course the sentiment behind these statements is quite understandable it's well meaning it's a natural desire to seek to comfort the bereaved like that but according to the Christian faith heaven is a real place Jesus is talking about a reality and if the only inevitability in life is death then we really ought to wake up and pay attention to what comes after that so in verse 4 of chapter 14

Jesus says you know the way to the place where I'm going very next verse Thomas says oh no he don't how can we know the way when we don't even know where you're going and the penny's still not dropped so still thinking spatially about where he's going but Jesus isn't just popping out to the nearest mini-mart to go and pick up some couscous for the roast lamb supper not able to follow him down the streets like that you see Thomas he fails to make a crucial distinction the way that Jesus is going is via the cross the way that we are to go is via Jesus the way that Jesus is going is via the cross the way that we are to go is via Jesus that's the difference you see it's in his going that Jesus becomes the way for them it's in his very going that he becomes the way for each of us Jesus says your way to God is not my way but me I am the way I am the truth I am the life and that's what he means when he says he's talking about going to prepare a place for us and we hear that Jesus preparing a place for us in heaven and we start to move in don't we our imaginations are let loose they run wild thinking about the grandeur of the deco and perhaps that's why it's taking so long for him to return because the projects run over schedule and interior designs got out of hand but that's not what Jesus is talking about at all misses the point his work is accomplished and on the night before his crucifixion when Jesus says I'm going to go and prepare a place for you in my father's house he means

I will lay down my life for you tomorrow I'm going to die by dying I'll prepare a place for you I am the way it is by his death on the cross that he's already prepared the way and note that this is an exclusive claim Jesus is the way and the only way he's not claiming to be one truth among many equally valid belief systems he's not claiming to be one route to eternal life but take your pick among the other options sort of thing now that sort of really cuts against the grain doesn't it of a kind of pluralistic society that we live in I guess some of you would have watched the king's first speech on Christmas day King Charles and his first Christmas speech a few weeks back was very much in line with the spirit of our age when he talked about whatever faith you have or whether you have none there's a light that shines out of every religion out of every human heart but these are

superficial sentimental soundbites might be what King

Charles says but it's not what King Jesus says he is not our way our truth but the way the truth the life and to spell it out for us emphatically so that there can be absolutely no doubt about it at all he says no one no one comes to the father except through me and all that should spur us on shouldn't it that should encourage us to go and buy some books for our friends after the church service if we know that Jesus is the way if we know that Jesus is the only way shouldn't we be a little bit bolder in sharing that message with others but if you're sitting on the fence at the moment then this passage says that there's really no hedging your bets

[23 : 52] Christ's claims are exclusive our society doesn't like that kind of thing but have a think imagine all your life you've been living next to a grand palace and you've been living there but there's no way in and the gates are locked and the fence too high to breach and then one day the son of the house comes next door and says I can take you there I can introduce you to the father if God is real if heaven is a reality as the bible says it is then how can there be any other way to the father other than through the son Jesus comes and says I can take you there I can take you to God no one else can do that well if we're already placing our trust in him then Jesus is the answer to both our questions isn't he where are you going

Jesus that's where he is our destination one day we will be with Jesus he is our goal he is our supreme hope he is our destination how are we going to get there Jesus Jesus is the way again our answer is Jesus he made the way he is the way the only way is Jesus the disciples in the upper room knew the way without realizing it because they knew the person of Jesus they followed the person Jesus so it's only when our perspective is thus reset that we're able to understand Jesus' commands in the passage it's only by being properly adequately heavenly minded that we can know how now we should live we can love each other sacrificially now in light of how Jesus has first loved us and because we're living in hope of eternity that puts everything else in perspective and though the world all around may seem hell bent on a course of self destruction we need not let our hearts be troubled for Jesus will surely one day come back and take us to him let me close with a story about Robert Bruce this is not Robert the Bruce we've already noted the importance of the word the in the passage but Robert Bruce the Scottish minister on the day of his death in 1631 ate an egg for breakfast he enjoyed it so much that he asked his daughter Martha to prepare him another one then hesitating he said no there's no need my master's calling me bring me my bible instead well Martha did this she brought him the bible and he said now God be with you my dear daughter I have breakfasted with you my daughter but this evening I will have supper with Jesus Christ my lord this very night well isn't this the kind of heavenly mindset that we're meant to and called to have here to live out our lives with our hope firmly in the future and isn't this what it is to be living and dying with the precious goal of our lord Jesus Christ so very clearly in our signs let's pray lord jesus in the words of the old chorus thank you jesus thank you jesus lord for loving us you died and rose up from the grave to us new life you gave you're coming back again and we with you shall reign thank you lord for loving us thank you jesus saying that for all you are and all you have done you are the way you are the truth you are the life in you alone we place our trust amen you i you you