

**John 14:1-14**

<sup>14</sup>Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

<sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going.” <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” <sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ <sup>10</sup>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; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup>Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

<sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

*Risen Lord, as you call us out of the darkness, and lead us into the way of your marvelous light, bless us to receive your holy Word, and fill us with your Holy Spirit; Amen.*

If you'll forgive me for using a sports analogy...Jesus was on the mound and “pitching” to his disciples what appeared to be his final instructions: **“Believe in God, believe also in me.”**

Thomas was first at bat. He appeared a little nervous.

Jesus wound up and delivered a curve ball: **“And you know the way to the place where I am going.”**

Thomas swung and missed: **“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”**

Jesus' next pitch was a fast ball. Thomas never saw it! All he heard was the sharp thwack as it hit the catcher's mitt: **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”**

The curve ball – you know **the way to the place** I am going – sets the disciples (Thomas in particular) up to be thinking of a physical place that one might find on a map for instance. If we know what we are

looking for, a map could be helpful. And if we had a map, we could, presumably, find *the way* to that place. It sounds like Jesus was going somewhere that his disciples could find; a real physical place.

Then Jesus explained what he meant: **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”** What kind of an answer is that? It is not a physical place per se, it's a person, and there is no particular path, or road to take; Jesus is **the way**. When we see Jesus, we see **the way**. When we abide in Jesus, we are on **the way**. When we walk with Jesus, we are walking on **the way**.

To help explain what he meant by **the way**, John records Jesus using the metaphor of vine and branches in the very next chapter.

***Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.*** (John 15:4-5)

So **the way** is not a road we can take. It is rather, how we live in Christ and how Christ lives in us. **“I am the way,”** Jesus said, **“abide in me as I abide in you.”** When we imagine Christ breathing in us, or when we meditate on Christ's presence, or when we pray for Christ to lead us, or when we give ourselves over to the will of Christ, we are on **the way**; the mystical experience of living in Christ

Back at the ball field, Philip was next at bat. First pitch: **“If you know me, you will know my Father also.”** Philip never got the bat off his shoulder; call strike one. Second pitch: Jesus said, **“From now on you do know the Father...”** Philip was caught flat-footed at the plate; strike two! Third pitch: Jesus continued, **“and you have seen the Father.”** Poor Philip, he struck out never swinging his bat.

Jesus was describing the mystical reality of the union of the Son and the Father; if you know and have seen Jesus, then you know and have seen the Father. But Philip was stuck in the literal mode and completely missed the revelation that Jesus was offering. Incredibly he asked, “Show us the father, and we will be satisfied.”

We must wonder if Philip had trouble hearing and seeing. And we can almost hear Jesus' exasperation as he wondered how long it would take for his disciples to get it. Our God is an indwelling God. The mystics down through the ages have always affirmed this spiritual truth.

Following *the way* is really about how we live centered in Christ, which means it's about living for others. This is how Jesus lived; he gave himself for others; he lived for others. By his life, Jesus showed us who God is. *The way* is sacrificial; Jesus gave himself away in love, even unto death.

What does that kind of sacrificial love look like today? May I suggest that we think of our mothers! My mom was always making sacrifices for our family. She loved us deeply and always put us before herself. She worked nights so that we could have extra money for vacations. She was always there if I needed to talk. She lived for our family. And so it was not surprising that she wanted her family with her when she was dying.

I was living in Bangor at the time. My sisters, Joanne and Sandra called me to say if I wanted to see her before she died I'd better come home right away. We packed up and headed for Connecticut. I arrived and was ushered straight to her bedroom. I said, "Hi Mom, I'm home." I sensed that she could hear me and I saw her relax. Within 15 minutes she was gone. She had been waiting to have all her children gathered around her.

A mother's love may be the closest thing to knowing God's love.

So it turns out that we don't need a map to find the way, Map Quest won't help us, Google Maps can't help either, and forget GPS. The "map" we need is our Bible, which points to Jesus the image of God, and that's how Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 4:4 – *the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

In the book of Acts, the early followers of Christ were known as people of *the Way*. When we let Jesus live in us and guide our steps, we too are people of *the Way*, and I suppose you could say that we become a "map" for others, just as our mothers were "maps" for us. Thanks be to God. Amen.