

The Way

Cooper

John 14:1-14

May 3, 2026

Thomas said to Jesus,
“Lord, we do not know where you are going.
How can we know the way?”
Jesus said to him,
“I am the way, and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me...
If in my name you ask for anything, I will do it.”

“I am the way.” What an odd thing to hear Jesus saying. An odd thing for anyone to say about themselves. And odder still, Jesus goes on to say, “I am the truth and the life.” Can you imagine saying that about yourself. Well, let’s not distract ourselves. Let’s focus our thought this morning on Jesus characterizing himself not by one of his many titles — as the messiah, the Christ, as Lord, as Prince of Peace, as Son of God, as second person of the Trinity, as Lamb of God, as Son of Man, as King of Kings, as Savior, as redeemer, and, of course, as Good Shepherd ... all those titles — but rather Jesus characterizes himself as “the way:” I am the way, Jesus says, referring to his way of being, to the way he lives his life, has his life. And what a life that is: teaching, healing, judging, even condemning, others, performing miracles; and doing all this on the road, for the Jesus of the gospels is walking from village to village, encountering men, women, pharisees, priests, laity, Samaritans, treating all with dignity — and then comes the great turnaround, the great ignominious turn-around, Jesus, the miracle worker, the prophet, the healer, suddenly weak and powerless: being arrested, charged, judged, condemned, hoisted onto a cross, nailed to it, dying, dead, brought down from the cross, carried to a tomb, buried, gone. The gospels even record the derision of the onlookers, scorning him, mocking him: if you are the Son of God, they say, take yourself down from the cross. For those onlookers, perhaps for us, if we were amongst them, Jesus being nailed to the cross disproves any messianic claims made for him. That fact alone would mean that there is no way he could be a royal or divine figure. And now, in John’s gospel, we find the risen Jesus, the very one who was unable to take himself down from the cross, telling his disciples that anything, anything, they ask in his name, he will do it. So, we have a puzzle before us this morning. Where do we find the redemptive power of God. Do we find it on the cross, at the crucified Jesus, the weak Jesus; or do we find it at the risen Jesus, telling the disciples that if they ask anything in his name, he will do it, that he has the power, the coercive, omnipotent power, to do whatever they ask for. I’m not going to keep you waiting as to where I believe the revelation of God’s redemptive power lies: It lies in the cross. Of course, I know only too well, something that all of us know only too well, that scripture is full of statements affirming God’s omnipotence, God’s ability to do whatever God wills to do,

The Way

affirming God as protecting us from harm, as protecting our loved ones from harm, as taking down our enemies. We find those statements repeatedly in scripture, and in our liturgy for that matter — “You have delivered us from evil” is part of our eucharistic prayer — but wish it as I might, that is not how I experience my life of faith, nor is it the way I experience the life of faith of those around me. Just one example. Years ago, when I was a seminary professor, a woman, a long divorced woman, who had just suffered the loss of her sixteen year old son, came to my office, asking me how God could allow her child, her only child, to die. She was a life long person of faith, a life long church goer, and God had taken her child the child she had lived for. She had gone to her pastor, asking him how God could do this; he had told her that God had a good reason for doing so, that there was a good purpose behind her child’s death. But she could not accept that; she could not believe there was any good purpose in her child’s death. So she came to me, to hear something else, something she could live with, something that was healing, something that would not undermine her faith in God. And what was I to tell her: that it was not God that took her child’s life, that God was with her in her suffering as God was with Jesus in his suffering on the cross. Well, yes, that’s exactly what I would tell her: that God’s healing, redemptive power is revealed to us on the cross, not obviously so, for it is a truth that can be known by faith alone, a truth that can be felt by faith alone and even then, not easily felt. And yet that is our faith. In the weakness of Christ that we see on the cross, we find the healing power of God. For God is love, and love suffers when the beloved suffers; and it is in the suffering love of God on the cross that we find God’s redemptive, healing power. For us believers, the depth of God’s majesty lies not in power, but in the weakness of love, in the apparent weakness of love, in God’s loving mercy, in God’s loving forgiveness, in God’s loving compassion. To know this, to have this faith, that God, Being Itself, the creator of our vast universe, cares for us, forgives us the wrongs we have committed in our lives, that is wondrously healing. So it is no wonder that we come to church to worship God. For what is church but an assembly of the faithful, who with all our differences, we come to church to show our gratitude to God; we come to church, where with all our differences we are one in accepting Jesus Christ as the way, the way to be for another, to be open towards another, to listen to another, to think of the other as our neighbor, whom Jesus asks us to love, to love, as if to love another is such an easy matter. And yet when we do care for another’s welfare, when we are helpful towards another, it is a joyful thing, is it not. For we find that to be there for another, restores a sense of meaning in our lives, for being there for another is grounded in God, where meaning finds its depth, for God is Being for Us, God is being for us eternally. Wondrous, isn’t it! So we give thanks.

Thanks be to God.

Thanks be to Christ. Amen.